The Wisdom of God's Fools

Edgar DeWitt Jones

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The wisdom of God's fools

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THE WISDOM OF GOD'S FOOLS

STUDIES IN SPIRITUAL SAGACITY

BY

EDGAR DEWITT JONES

Author of "The Inner Circle."

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To

MY GRANDFATHER

DAVID ALLAN RUMBLE

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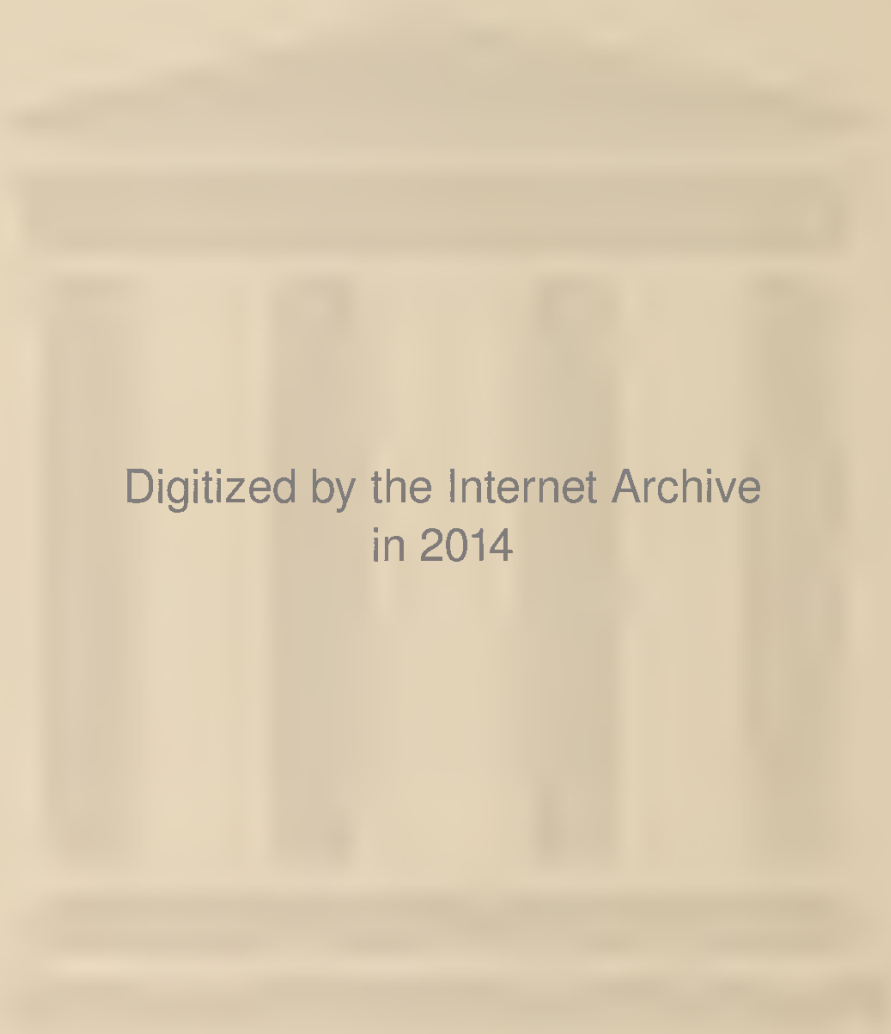

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I

THE WISDOM OF GOD'S FOOLS

"Thou canst not prove the Nameless, O my son,
Nor canst thou prove the world thou movest in,
Thou canst not prove that thou art body alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art spirit alone,
Nor canst thou prove that thou art both in one,
Thou canst not prove that thou art immortal, no,
Nor yet that thou art mortal—nay, my son,
Thou canst not prove that I, who speak with thee,
Am not thyself in converse with thyself;
For nothing worthy proving can be proven,
Nor yet disproven: wherefore be thou wise,
Cleave ever to the sunnier side of doubt,
And cling to faith beyond the forms of faith!"

ALFRED TENNYSON.

I

THE WISDOM OF GOD'S FOOLS

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean."—*II Kings* 5:17.

THAT was one of the wisest suggestions ever made by a human being. If it is possible to compress the quintessence of common sense into a single sentence we have it here in this advice of the servants to their master, Captain Naaman.

Naaman was the military commander of Syria, honoured and highly esteemed by his king and country; but withal, Naaman was a leper, though in his case the disease was either incipient or of a light form. Yet even so, the affliction was serious and the outcome full of peril. Very likely Naaman had experimented with many cures, but all in vain. His family, his friends, and his king were gravely concerned about the matter. It happened that a little Israelitish maid, who had been taken captive by a marauding band, waited on Naaman's wife, and one day she said to her mistress: "Would that my Lord were with the prophet in Samaria, then would he recover him of

the leprosy." Naturally, the remark of the little maid at once interested her mistress, and it came to pass that not long after this incident Naaman, with a great retinue of servants and with much pomp, journeyed to Israel's king and thence to Elisha, the prophet, seeking to be healed of his leprosy.

The cavalcade alighted in front of Elisha's house and expectantly awaited his appearance. But the prophet did not even deign to come out and see the great soldier. Instead, Elisha sent a messenger to Naaman saying: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thy flesh shall become clean." The commander-in-chief of the Syrian army was amazed. Yea, more, he was shocked. He had expected a demonstration, he had looked for the prophet to come out and with much pomp and ceremony pronounce a cure. As has been finely said: "Naaman expected to be treated as a great man who happened to be a leper; Elisha treated him as a leper, who happened to be a great man."

"Bathe seven times in the river Jordan,"—such was the prophet's prescription. Captain Naaman was angry, his pride was hurt, he believed himself insulted. As for rivers, why, his own country boasted of Abanah and Pharpar—much more beautiful streams than the Jordan. Naaman decided not to comply with the prophet's command, and he ordered preparations for the homeward journey. Naaman was going back to Syria, and

alas, he was going back still a *leper*. It was at this critical point that the servants of Naaman came near. They loved their master and that spoke well for him. The servants said to the disappointed and wrathful captain: "My father, [the affectionate term is very tender and beautiful], My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? How much rather when he saith to thee, Wash and be clean."

This advice of Naaman's servants is noteworthy for more than one reason. In a wider sense than the particular application to the case of Naaman, the remark contains a philosophy that is profoundly true. The human race is tyrannized by the so-called great things. We are obsessed by contemplation of the great, the unusual, the out-of-the-ordinary, the dramatic and spectacular; whereas, it is the simple, the commonplace, the apparent trifle, that is oftenest the medium of God's voice to us. Nature reflects this truth. Every day in God's great out-of-doors, so far as the average eye can see, is commonplace. Nothing unusual is happening, growth is never clamorous or rampant. Flowers do not announce their blooming by deafening explosions, the trees do not leaf with orchestra accompaniment. Apples and peaches do not advertise their ripening by the ringing of bells. There is obedience to the law of God in nature, and lo, quietly the green comes

and goes, seedtime and harvest, planting and reaping. Life is composed almost entirely of what we wrongfully term commonplace things, the round of daily toil of sewing and mending, of dusting and sweeping, or the daily grind in office and store and in shop and on the farm—homespun ministrations are these, and yet Divinity is in and among them every one. Likewise, growth in graces of character is quiet, is not puffed up, goes not on dress parade. Verily, there is much wisdom in the speech of Naaman's servants.

It is to the credit of Naaman that he heeded the good advice of his servants. Proud man that he was, he bowed his stubborn will and obeyed the command of Elisha. He did precisely what the prophet told him to do; he bathed himself not once or twice or three times, but seven times in the river Jordan, and his flesh came as the flesh of a little child. Naaman became a fool for God's sake and the wisdom of God was demonstrated in the cure which followed. What had seemed Naaman's wisdom was Naaman's folly, and what had seemed foolishness in Naaman's eyes was in reality the deepest wisdom.

The story of Naaman illustrates the wisdom of God's fools, which consists in being willing to take God at His word. The wisdom of God is foolishness to many. The Apostle Paul, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, amplifies this truth. In the first chapter, eighteenth verse, he writes:

"For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." And again in the twentieth verse: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" And in the twenty-first verse: "For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe." And once more in the twenty-fifth verse of the same chapter: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men." And to these Scriptures the Apostle's words in the same Epistle, second chapter, fourteenth verse, may be added: "Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged."

Naaman illustrated a common trait of mankind when he flatly refused to obey the prophet's command because it displeased him. He was not willing to take Elisha at his word, since his word was so very different from what he had expected. In Naaman's eyes the thing at first appeared ridiculous. "Bathe seven times in the river Jordan." It was absurd!

Christianity has been a stumbling-block because of its very simplicity, a stumbling-block to the

worldly wise. The very first steps of becoming a Christian—the so-called "first principles of Christianity," are to many as so much foolishness. The matter of a confession of faith by word of mouth in the belief of Jesus as the Son of God, the confession of faith and the vow of consecration in the ordinance of baptism is as foolishness to the wiseacres of the world. To walk quietly down a church aisle during the singing of such a hymn as: "How Firm a Foundation, Ye Saints of the Lord," and in the presence of a congregation made up of people from all walks of life, make a personal confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, is to some a non-essential act. Moreover, to the worldly wise, it has in it a compromise of dignity, stubborn pride resists it, and falls back upon the question "Is it really necessary after all?"

It is reported that a great lady once asked a minister: "Do I have to become a Christian the same way that my footman does?" "Precisely the same way," was the answer. "Then I won't be one," she replied. Alas, the wisdom of the world that demands some great thing, rejects the prophetic word, and disobeys the heavenly vision, simply because the task is unpleasant or the command seems unreasonable. God's fools are those that take Him at His word, like Joshua, of whom it was said: "He left nothing undone of all the Lord commanded Moses;" like Samuel, who, as a

lad, answered the voice of God, saying: "Speak, for thy servant heareth;" like Isaiah in the presence of the Almighty exclaiming: "Here am I, send me;" like the three thousand on the day of Pentecost crying out: "Brethren, what shall we do?" like Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus way, who, beholding a great light and hearing the Divine voice, exclaimed: "What shall I do, Lord?" like the great line of prophets, apostles, martyrs, missioners, reformers—great souls who became the fools of God and thereby the truly wise.

The wisdom of God's fools consists also in doing with wholeheartedness the ministries which at first blush seem to be, in the foolishness of man, beneath his dignity. The great ethics that Christ taught are in a way simplicity par excellence. The heart of our Christian faith, so far as conduct is concerned, is embodied in the Sermon on the Mount, and the Sermon on the Mount is foolishness to the wise of this earth. A famous statesman, now dead, some twenty-five years ago, affirmed in a speech which was widely quoted, that the Sermon on the Mount and the Ten Commandments had no place in politics. The opinion of the world, so far as it gives consideration at all to the Sermon on the Mount, is that this great teaching of Jesus is impracticable and visionary, the product of the mind of a dreamer. Such virtues as resisting the evil, suffering injustice rather than going to law, turning

the other cheek to the smiter, walking the extra mile, what foolishness these are to the worldly minded! With what fine scorn some professed Christians regard such ministries as teaching a class in the Sunday School or leading a prayer meeting or doing some necessary though humble work in the name of the Nazarene, only to discover after experience in such work the wisdom of it, the glory and grandeur of it, the Christlikeness of such ministries.

A minister spoke to a judge of his acquaintance —a lawyer of distinction in the State—" Judge," he said, " I want you to take a class of boys in the Sunday School." " It is impossible," said the judge, " I am a busy man and I can see no reason why I should teach a class of boys even if I had the time." " The boys all respect you," continued the minister, " you are a hero to many of them, you could interest them from the first." But the judge closed the interview abruptly by affirming that he simply could not think of taking a class of boys in the Sunday School. A week later the minister was surprised to receive a call from the same judge, who began with strange hesitation,— " I have called to say that . . . I will try that class. I thought it all out after you left. It was pride that made me refuse. I thought I was too great a man to teach a class of boys. I tell you, sir, I am a hypocrite, I have tried to play the distinguished gentleman and I have been worthless to the King-

dom. Put me to work. I do not know how to teach little boys, I am too ignorant but I am willing to learn." At the close of his first year in the Sunday School that distinguished judge said to his minister: "Teaching that class has been the greatest thing that ever happened to me. I never had any definition of service before. I shall never cease to thank God for opening my eyes to see myself as I really was." The judge had learned wisdom by becoming one of God's fools.

There is the language of wisdom as learned by one who had become a fool for Christ's sake in the simple hymn of consecration:

"It may not be on the mountain's height,
Or over the stormy sea;
It may not be at the battle's front
My Lord will have need of me.
But if by a still small voice He calls
To paths that I do not know,
I'll answer, dear Lord, with my hand in Thine,
I'll go where you want me to go.
I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord,
Over mountain or plain, or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord,
I'll be what you want me to be."

God's word to Naaman, through the prophet, is through Jesus Christ to us, in essence, the same—"Wash and be clean." Holiness, that is wholeness of character, clean minds, pure hearts, righteousness—this is the essence of Christianity. Forms and ceremonies have their uses, but they are the shell; the kernel of our religion is right-

eousness, right living, right thinking, right acting. The wisdom of the world is sceptical of the value attributed to righteousness, and is inclined to challenge the good of it all. The worldly wise are of the opinion that brilliance, cleverness, money, place, and power, can and do accomplish more and accomplish it more quickly than the slow and quiet processes of simple faith and good works. But God's fool knows better, and there is only one way to learn that the foolishness of God is wiser than men and that is to take Him at His word, to trust and obey.

"Wash and be clean," was God's word to Naaman. Naaman's leprosy made him a peril to society, to his wife and family, to his king and country, and bound up in that cure of Naaman's leprosy was salvation for the society in which Naaman moved. No man has ever lived or died to himself unless he lived and died a hermit with no other human being in sight or sound. God's word today is as it was to Naaman—"Wash and be clean" in way of thinking, in way of acting, in attitude toward God and man; and to heed that word means more than the salvation of the individual—it means that every man and woman who becomes a fool of God and so becomes wise unto salvation serves society, supplies society with saving salt, thereby making it more difficult for society to go wrong and therefore easier for society to do right.

Would you be God's fool? Then take God at His word. Make the high venture of faith. Launch out into the deep. "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it." Give the cup of cold water. Go the second mile. Suffer injustice rather than go to law. Turn the other cheek to the smiter. Wash and be clean. Be numbered among the fools of the world and accept for leader the Wisest.

"Wash and be clean! Proud soul, doth this offend
Thy haughtiness? But half-convinced of sin,
The door of mercy will not let thee in
Until in meek humility thou bend.
Say, foolish soul, what did thy prayer intend,
Thy cry: O, how shall I salvation win?
Zeal would consume thee, had the answer been
Of toils and tasks herculean, without end.
But to repent, believe, and be forgiven,—
A thing a child, a simpleton, might do!
'Twas no such work as this thou hadst in view,
But by thy powers, full-strained, to merit heaven.
Behold, thy powers are nothing in God's eyes;
Thy ransom is the blood thou wouldest despise."

GRACIOUS HEAVENLY FATHER, WE WHO HAVE SO OFTEN BEEN AT HOME AMONG THE WORLDLY WISE, NOW SEEK TO BE NUMBERED WITH THE FOOLS OF GOD. THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD WE HAVE TRIED AND FOUND WANTING. WE ENTREAT THEE FOR THAT PURE AND PEACEABLE WISDOM WHICH COMETH DOWN FROM ABOVE. HUMBLY WE BOW BEFORE THEE WILLING TO TAKE THEE AT THY WORD. SPEAK, LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH.

II

THE SOUL'S NEED OF SILENCE

"Into the woods my Master went,
Clean forspent, forspent;
Into the woods my Master came,
Forspent with love and shame.
But the olives they were not blind to Him,
The little grey leaves were kind to Him,
The thorn-tree had a mind to Him,
When into the woods He came.

"Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content;
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.
When death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last;
'Twas on a tree they slew Him last,
When out of the woods He came."

SIDNEY LANIER.

II

THE SOUL'S NEED OF SILENCE

"Be still, and know that I am God."—*Psalm* 46: 10.

LIKE all immortal poems, the Psalms were not written to order. The authors did not produce them by first deciding that it would be a splendid performance to embalm Israel's hopes and fears in verse and then with little thought dashed them off straightway. The Psalms of Israel are the irrepressible songs of her great singers. They could not be written until their writers had passed through certain experiences; then they had to be written. David, in the thirty-ninth Psalm, gives some hint of their method of writing when he exclaims: "While I was musing the fire burned." Quite naturally, it came about that the Psalms are fraught with religious experiences, either personal or national. The forty-sixth Psalm has a background of uncommon interest since it was likely written in commemoration of the destruction of Sennacherib's host in the days of King Hezekiah. The overwhelming tragedy, which is recorded in II Kings, 19:35-37, occurred during the nighttime, when the angel of the Lord smote one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians, both horses and riders. The famous

lines of Byron, in his Hebrew melody, will be recalled, especially the last stanza:

> "And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
> And the idols are broken in the temples of Baal,
> And the might of the Gentiles unsmote by the sword
> Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord."

It is this destruction of the Assyrian host by the hand of the Lord that is in the Psalmist's mind. In imagination he beholds the devastating power of God descending in awful destruction upon Israel's enemy. He beholds the earth heaped and strewn with débris, broken bows, splintered spears, half-charred chariots, the rigid bodies of men and horses; and thus viewing the host laid low forever, he realizes how feeble and futile are the devices of man as compared with the power of Almighty God. Indeed, that sight of wreck and ruin seems to have a voice, the Almighty speaks, and the Psalmist hears Him say: "Be still, and know that I am God."

"Be still!" That is the most difficult of all commands for us moderns. Perhaps it never was easy to be still, but it is particularly difficult now. Ours is a fussy age, a fast and furious time, a vociferous period. All the irons that we possess are in the fire. Our activities are manifold. There are organizations for every day and night in the week and half a dozen for the Lord's day. A mad haste characterizes our daily life; speed is at a premium. When Mr. G. Lowes Dickinson, the

famous publicist, made his first visit to America his conclusion was that the dominant American passion was the desire for wealth. On his second visit he revised that judgment and decided that our great ambition was not for wealth so much as for power. On his third visit, however, he decided that the ruling passion of America was for neither one of these, but the demand for acceleration. Of the same tenor is the remark of a noted American architect, who, in a conversation with the Italian historian, Ferrero, said: "My fellow countrymen would willingly spend a hundred million dollars to build a church as beautiful as St. Mark's in Venice. But they would command me, as a condition of my undertaking the work, to finish it within eighteen months."

The word "feverish" describes better than any other word our modern life. Our home life is feverish; our business life is feverish; our social life is feverish; even our religious life is feverish, and the average church with its round of rallies and special meetings aggravates rather than rests its nerve-worn members. Our days are shortened by anxiety, worry, and concern. We lack poise, balance, and quiet reserve power. "Be still!" That is a hard command for us to obey. Rather bid us to buy, to sell, to speak, to sing, to play. Command us to do anything but "Be still." Ask of us the reasonable, not the impossible.

In a very large way meditation is a lost art with

us. Meditation is difficult, if not impossible in the round of hurly-burly distractions of our way of living. Many of us do not want to think; we prefer to be entertained. We are not given to musing, but we have a passion to be amused. Our most popular form of diversion—the moving pictures—is not an aid to meditation. Such words as contemplation, reflection, and meditation are not of our vocabulary. We dote on efficiency. The word strenuous is popular with us; and if the spirit of our times has any word of command for us it is "Speed up!"

"Be still!" There is a ministry in silence. Not silence for silence's sake, to be sure, for that might denote the quintessence of selfishness. Some of us would like to be silent that we might be the noisier by-and-bye. Silence with some would be welcomed merely as a shock-absorber. I recall reading some years ago the story of a business man who was worn to the point of collapse by a heavy round of official responsibility. One day he happened to be in the office of a physician where there was an odd-looking machine. The physician pointed to it and explained: "That machine can make you deaf. If you would like to have your hearing deadened all you will need to do is to sit down in this chair, look steadily at that disc, and in five minutes you will be deaf to all ordinary noises. This same machine can restore your hearing whenever you wish it. Would

you like to try the experiment?" For answer the weary business man sat down in the chair and directed the physician to set the machine going. Immediately the disc began to revolve rapidly, producing a peculiar purring kind of sound not at all unpleasant to the ear. In a few minutes the man in the chair, who was intently watching the disc, could distinguish no sound at all. The experiment over, the physician reminded his patient to return when he desired his hearing restored. The man went out on the street where a hush had fallen over all. He heard neither the noise of traffic nor the cries of the newsboys, but picked his way through the crowded streets now gratefully silent for him. Everywhere he went sweet silence reigned soothing and resting his worn nerves; and the outcome of the story was that the tired business man refused to permit the doctor to restore his hearing, preferring deafness and silence to the clamour and din of the world. I recall that at the time I read the incident I thought the cure a selfish one; but silence for the sake of silence is not that which the Psalmist has in mind. Instead he commands silence for a more spiritual purpose. The word of the Psalmist is not simply: "Be still!" but "Be still, and know that I am God." The ministry of silence is that of being still that we may come to know God.

There is only one way that we can know God and that is spiritually. In Jesus' conversation

with the woman of Samaria He declared that "God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." We know one another in our human relationships by the physical senses, by joining hand to hand, eye looking into eye, or as words passed from mouth to ear. But God can neither be seen, nor heard, nor touched, as we see, know, and touch one another. He can be approached only spiritually; He can be apprehended only as our spirit experiences contact with His spirit. And this approach to God is not accidental, but a matter of thought and power of the will and fixed habits of life. Our minds will have to be staid on Him if we are to be kept in perfect peace; we shall have to be still to know that He is God. Jesus gave wise counsel when, in His Sermon on the Mount, He said: "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet."

It is this closet experience that we are needing. We must be alone with God and most of us seldom are. Herein is where we fail. We make little or no provision for increasing our knowledge of God by deliberately choosing to be with Him and with Him alone. The "skeleton in the closet" of many nominal Christians is the ghost of prayer habits once formed but now broken and abandoned. All the great souls who have known God have come to know Him by this manner of approach. The biographies of the great preachers, missionaries, every devout Christian, all bear wit-

ness to the potency of prayer. The lives of the outstanding characters in the Holy Scriptures bear eloquent testimony to the same source of power. The secret of their strength is found in those closet experiences where, alone with God, they came to know Him and His purposes for them; and their lives became channels through which His spirit wrought wondrous things. Jacob is the classic illustration of the Old Testament. The early life of Jacob is not pleasant reading, and the wrong he did his brother is hard to forget. The young man leaves his home and starts out to make a place for himself in the world. And that first night away from home he lays himself down to sleep beneath the Syrian stars and moon; and whilst it is night he has a vision of God and His angels. The experience makes a deep impression on Jacob, who vows a vow, dedicates his life to God in a larger and more intimate way; sets up a pillar there and calls it: Bethel. The years pass on and Jacob's life is a curious mixture of good and evil. Seemingly he has forgotten Bethel; then comes his separation from his father-in-law, Laban; his journeying back toward his old home; and lo, the warning of Esau's approach with four hundred men. Again Jacob is left alone with God, and that night came the crisis of his life. Jacob confessing his dependence upon God, is born again; he becomes a new creature and Jehovah gives him a new name. Instead of Jacob,

which means a supplanter, he is called Israel, which signifies A Prince with God. And, as with Jacob, so with all other great characters of the Bible, they found power in and by close communion with God. Abraham on the mountain; Moses in the wilderness of Midian; Gideon on the threshing floor; Samuel in the house of Eli; David in the cave; Elijah in the mountain fastness; Isaiah in the temple; Daniel in his own room with the windows open toward Jerusalem; John the Baptist in the wilderness; Paul in Arabia; John on the Island of Patmos;—the great company of patriarchs, prophets, priests, apostles, martyrs, missionaries, were all made strong through the ministry of silence.

Mr. Stewart Edward White wrote a book a few years ago called "The Silent Places," describing some of the great silent stretches of God's out-of-doors. Every life should have its silent places, its closet experiences, where God and man meet and commune. These places may vary in location though alike in aloneness with God. As Isaac of old went out to meditate in the field at eventide, so God's out-of-doors may serve as an oratory for many a soul who is seeking Him. Never shall I forget a day when all alone I stood on the rim of the Grand Canyon of Arizona and looked into that Titan of Chasms, piled with mountains, furrowed with valleys, and jewelled with "purple peaks remote." A great silence came upon me

and I heard God's voice speaking in the majesty and awful grandeur of that wonder of the world. Sometimes in open field, sometimes along the seashore, sometimes in the depth of a great forest, alone with God we may experience the ministry of silence and thereby enrich our knowledge of the Almighty. But, oftenest and perhaps best and wisest, is the silent period in the seclusion of one's room. Not all of us can go to mountain, or seashore; not all of us can walk every day in quiet country fields. We are a busy people; families are dependent upon us; we have much to do; but there is not one of us who may not keep the quiet hour if we choose to have it so. Fifteen minutes every day, either in the morning or the evening (the morning is perhaps the better time), in quiet meditation and devotional reading of a brief Scriptural passage, is the best possible preparation for a busy day of work. Yet how few keep the quiet hour or provide for the silent places. Perhaps not one in a thousand who wears the Christian name makes this provision for the soul's need of silence. And because we neglect this our lives may be powerless; defeat comes instead of victory; discouragement enters where hope and expectancy should abide. "Be still, and know that I am God." The soul needs silence; our lives hunger for the bread of heaven, and we know not where to find supply. Behold a storehouse at our right hand!

Of all who have ever lived, none knew God as

Jesus Christ knew Him. How came it so? Be sure it was not an accident. No busier man ever walked the earth than Jesus during those days when He journeyed through Galilee, Judea, Perea, healing, teaching and blessing the multitudes. But diligent as Jesus was, His life was never feverish; He never was ruffled; He never was caught off His guard; His poise was perfect. And there is a reason for it. Occupied as He was, thronged by the multitude, sometimes too busy to rest or eat, Jesus kept inviolate His times of retirement when, alone with the Father, He found strength for His unwearied ministry. Such sentences as these from the Gospel narrative reveal the open secret of His well-poised life: "He went out into the solitary place and there He prayed." "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and there He prayed." "He rose up a little while before day and departed into a solitary place to pray." "And it came to pass in these days that He went out into the mountain to pray, and He continued all night in prayer to God." In the silent places Jesus Christ came to know God as no one before nor since has known him. Think of Gethsemane:

> "'Tis midnight, and on Olive's brow
> The star is dim that lately shone.
> 'Tis midnight,—in the Garden now
> The suffering Saviour prays alone."

It was in the Garden, and not on Calvary, that Jesus won the great victory. He was alone in that

experience, parted a stone's cast from James and John and Peter—His three intimates. And alone in the Garden with God Jesus learned the Father's will completely. And from that silent place, with the light of victory bathing His brow in beauty, He suffered Himself to be led away to His triumphant victory

"Be still, and know that I am God." Aye, it is hard to learn to be still. It is as hard for us to be still when God bids us as it is for our children when we bid them to be quiet. And yet the soul has need of silence if we grow in knowledge of God; and whether or not we choose to be still, by-and-bye the experience must come when we shall perforce have to be still. Some great and bitter disappointment will come like a bolt from the blue; our hopes will be blasted into nothingness; our castles in the air will dissolve; for us the heavens will become as brass; our strength turned into weakness; our manifold activities and boundless energies suddenly paralyzed. We shall have no heart to go about our wonted occupations; life will have palled upon us and all the world wear the weeds of widowhood. Or, it may be that stillness will come by way of death in the household. A voice will be stilled that made music all the day; the laughter of a little child heard no more on stairway or through hall; wife or husband, mother or father, may be gathered into the "vasty halls of death" and over the household there will

come such a stillness as can almost be felt. And then, oh miracles of miracles, out of that great silence there may be vouchsafed unto us a vision of God that will satisfy our soul's deepest longings. Scales will fall from our eyes, and like Jacob of old we shall gain a new victory and win for ourselves a new name.

"I walk down the Valley of Silence,—
Down the dim, voiceless valley—alone!
And I hear not the fall of a footstep
Around me, save God's and my own;
And the hush of my heart is as holy
As hovers where angels have flown!

"Do you ask me the place of the Valley,
Ye hearts that are harrowed with care?
It lieth far between mountains,
And God and His angels are there;
And one is the dark mount of Sorrow,
And one is the bright mountain of Prayer."

THOU GOOD AND WISE FATHER, TEACH US TO BE QUIET, HELP US TO BE STILL. HUSH THOU OUR CLAMOROUS OUTCRIES, STAY OUR FUTILE STRIFE. CALM OUR FEVERISH LIVES. STABLISH OUR SOULS IN SILENCE THAT OUR KNOWLEDGE OF THEE MAY GROW AND "MORE OF REVERENCE IN US DWELL."

III

THE CASE OF JUDAS OF KERIOTH

"Who could have thought my shrivell'd heart
Could have recover'd greenness? It was gone
Quite underground: as flowers depart
To see their mother-root, when they had blown;
Where they together
All the hard weather,
Dead to the world, keep house unknown.

"These are thy wonders, Lord of power,
Killing and quickening, bringing down to hell
And up to heaven in an hour;
Making a chiming of a passing bell
We say amiss,
This or that is:
Thy word is all, if we could spell."

JAMES LEARMOUNT.

III

THE CASE OF JUDAS OF KERIOTH

> "And when it was evening he cometh with the twelve. And as they sat and were eating, Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, one of you shall betray me, even he that eateth with me. They began to be sorrowful, and to say unto him one by one, Is it I? And he said unto them, It is one of the twelve, he that dippeth with me in the dish."—*Mark* 14: 17-20.

THERE were thirteen men present at the Last Supper in an upper room in Jerusalem; thirteen—yet as we gaze upon the scene we can discern clearly but two—Jesus and Judas. The eleven others are as so many lay figures and for the time they do but fill in the background. Jesus of Nazareth and Judas of Kerioth, these two fill the canvas of that scene completely; they dominate it wholly. And what a contrast—Jesus and Judas! Set a day of sunshine and roses over again storm-filled night of no moon or stars; limpid, life-giving stream over against foul miasmatic swamp; set peace serene and life buoyant over against war terrible and death horrible; range heaven alongside of hell; and at first blush the contrast is not greater than that of Jesus and Judas. Even so, I am believing that we have but skimmed the surface of this

solemn and tragic narrative. We praise Jesus and condemn Judas; and think we have finished. We shall do well to examine this sad story yet more searchingly and it may be that we shall discover lessons hitherto overlooked.

JESUS KNEW WHAT WAS IN JUDAS' MIND, YET WITHOUT THE SLIGHTEST SHOW OF ANGER HE DEALT WITH HIM IN TENDEREST LOVE. Try to imagine the scene; put yourself in Jesus' place. Here was a company of twelve who had been with Him for three years, comrades, friends, intimates; and now one of them was about to betray the Master, to sell Him for a bagful of silver into the hands of His enemies. Not only so, but that one was in the room and to all outward appearance as loving, as loyal, as the others. There is something serpentine about a traitor; there is something low and devilish in treason. If we had been in Jesus' place what would we have done? If I had been there what would I have done? If I understand myself at all, I think I know what I would have been tempted to do if I had been in Jesus' place in that upper room. I think I would have risen from the table, white faced and trembling, full to overflowing with hot anger, and pointing with shaking finger toward Judas, I would have said: "That man is a traitor; he is selling me into the enemy's hands; yet he pretends to be my friend. This room is too small for him and me; I cannot breathe with such an ingrate

here; take him from this place and as you take him do with him whatever you think his damnable treason deserves." In some such manner I can imagine myself dealing with Judas. But recollect now what Jesus did that last night in the upper room.

First and foremost, Jesus washed Judas' feet. In the absence of a servant, the twelve disciples should have performed this menial service each for the other; but engrossed in the discussion of "which was accounted to be greatest" they omitted it entirely. So Jesus girded Himself with a towel and taking a basin of water began to wash the feet of His disciples, one after another, John and James and Peter and Judus; *yes, Jesus washed the feet of Judas.*

"Christ washed the feet of Judas!
The dark and evil passions of his soul,
His secret plot, and sordidness complete,
His hate, his purposing, Christ knew the whole;
And yet, in love He stooped and washed his feet.

"Christ washed the feet of Judas!
Though all his lurking sin was bare to Him,
His bargain with the priest and more than this
In Olivet beneath the moonlight dim,
Aforehand knew and felt the treacherous kiss.

"Christ washed the feet of Judas!
And so ineffable His love, 'twas mete
That pity fill His great forgiving heart
And tenderly to wash the traitor's feet,
Who, in his Lord, had basely sold his part.

"Christ washed the feet of Judas!
And thus a girded servant, self-abased,
Taught that no wrong this side the gate of heaven
Was e'er too great to wholly be effaced,
And though unasked, in spirit be forgiven.

"And so, if we have ever suffered wrong
Of trampled rights, of caste, it matters not
Whate'er the soul has felt or suffered long,
O heart, this one thing must not be forgot,
Christ washed the feet of Judas!"

Not only did Jesus wash the feet of His betrayer, but He also gave the sop to Judas: John 13:26. To give the sop was a mark of distinction, a token of affection, and of special favour. When an Oriental entertained his guests he singled out the one he wished to honour most by dipping a piece of bread in a syrup and handing it to a favourite guest. Such was the manner in which Jesus honoured Judas when that disciple stood on the very brink of his act of treason and betrayal. Jesus did not give this sop to Judas simply as a sign to let John know who the betrayer was. That was quite incidental and secondary. Jesus singled out Judas for this honour and gave the sop to him as a token of the love which was well-nigh breaking His heart at that very moment. And not only for Judas, but for all His disciples who should ever be tempted as Judas was, Jesus gave the sop that awful night of His betrayal. As He dipped the sop and handed it to Judas it was as if He said in that very act: "Judas, I know what is in thy

heart. I know thy purpose to betray me; but I love thee, Judas. See, here is the sop as a token of my love for thee. Judas, now canst thou betray me into the hands of my enemies? Judas, I love thee."

This is one of the apparently slight incidents in the life of our Lord which is portentous with deep-going lessons. In the attitude of Jesus toward Judas in the upper room, there is a revelation of the very heart of God. Jesus loved Judas to the very end. It is beyond our comprehension that neither the washing of his feet, nor the giving of the sop, broke down utterly the purpose of the betrayer. Evidently, Jesus saw then that the case was hopeless; that Judas was determined to do the deed, and He therefore said to him: "What thou doest, do quickly." That is to say: "Since you are bound to betray me, Judas, betray me as soon as you can. Let it be over at the earliest possible moment." What a human touch this is! When we know that something in the way of a tragic experience impending and certain is about to come upon us we want it to come at once and be ended. If the waters are to overcome us we cannot bear to hear them fall, drip by drip, and feel them rise by slow inches about us. Instead, we welcome the flood from the open gates which pour upon us with terrible tide.

JUDAS' SIN WAS NOT AN ISOLATED ONE, NOR DOES IT PLACE HIM IN A CLASS ALL BY HIMSELF.

Dante, in his picture of "The Inferno," attempts to measure the terrible sin of the betrayer by placing poor Judas next to Satan himself. There is no warrant for such a conception of Judas' sin, either in the Scriptures or in reason. An eminent English preacher informs us that in his early ministry he prepared and preached a sermon on Judas in which he excoriated him and held his act up to shame and terrible condemnation. He fairly flayed poor Judas, and for several years the sermon was with him a prime favourite. But there came a time when he began to lose interest in that sermon on Judas, and there came a day when he laid it aside never to preach it again. I fancy nearly every young preacher has had a similar experience. In my early ministry I prepared with great care a sermon on the betrayer which I called: "Judas, a Study in Black." But I cannot preach that sermon now. Similarly, there will come a time in every young preacher's experience when he will not preach that kind of a sermon on Judas. He will leave off flaying Judas because he comes to know that treason to Christ did not cease when Judas died. He begins to understand himself, and is too conscious of temptation to traitorous thoughts and deeds to hold up Judas only to scorn or flout his treason. There is a text from Paul, sooner or later every conscientious preacher must take to heart: 1 Corinthians 10:12—"When a man thinketh he standeth let him take heed lest he fall."

Reflect upon the exclamations of the disciples when Jesus said to them: "One of you shall betray me." Immediately they all began to inquire: "Lord, is it I?" "Is it I?" "Is it I?" And in like manner, when the matter of our Lord's betrayal in these latter days is considered, so must we all, if we are sincere and candid, inquire: "Lord, is it I?" "Is it I?" Judas, for thirty pieces of silver, betrayed his Lord; and Judas has many successors. The solemn truth is that it is easier to trace the succession of Judas than the Apostolic succession. Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, and some sell their Lord today at a lower price than that. Thirty minutes of compromise of honour, virtue, or truth, a "passing thrill, a momentary titillation of a nerve," political prestige, public office, foolish pride, sordid ambitions —all prizes, some great, some small,—which are offered to nowaday disciples of Jesus to sell Him out. Moreover, some who sell Jesus in these modern times—unlike Judas—do not return the blood money, but keep it in the bank and check it out for pleasure trips, automobiles, and beautiful homes. No, if we are honest with ourselves we must be honest with Judas. He sinned deeply and tragically; but his sin does not put him in a class of infamy all by himself. Alas, Judas is but one of a great company. Until our own hands are clean and our own hearts pure, we cannot consistently single out Judas for blow upon blow,

and stripe upon stripe, from the rod of our censure.

JUDAS WAS WITH THE SINLESS ONE FOR THREE YEARS, AND HE WAS NOT MADE BETTER; THEREFORE HE WAS MADE WORSE. It is ever so. It could not be otherwise. If a man becomes a disciple of Christ and is not therefore made better, he will become worse. Depend upon it, if he does not become better he will deteriorate, and leanness of soul will result. The very fact that it is possible for one to receive the tokens of preferment, as Judas did the sop, and still close his heart to love Divine, is a terrible warning to triflers with the things of the soul. A man who listens to Jesus' teaching, who sits under it Lord's day after Lord's day, and yet is unmoved and makes no response to that "tide too full for sound or foam," by-and-bye, such a one will be overwhelmed by that very flood of misused privileges. The last state of such a one is always worse than the first. It is a great responsibility to make the confession of Christ; a weighty obligation to become His disciple; a serious business to become a member of His church. To do so, and get no further than a form and ceremony, or a nominal membership, necessarily means a consequent falling away, a slow but sure spiritual decay.

The strange incident of Jesus cursing the "braggard fig tree," Matthew 21:20-22, Mark 11:20-25, contains the solemn warning for those

who wear the livery of heaven but possess not heaven in the heart. The fig tree was condemned not for being fruitless, but for being false. Outwardly it announced to the world that it was fruitful; by the profusion of leaves that it put forth it professed to have fruit; but instead there was nothing thereon but leaves. As a symbol of moral and religious character, the tree was a deceiver and a hypocrite, and for this reason Jesus pronounced a symbolic judgment upon it.

In a certain city, within a radius of four blocks, there reside four former superintendents of Sunday Schools, who, according to a distinguished minister, never so much as darken a church door now. It is not necessary to know the reasons why they fell away from their high estate; it is only necessary to know they fell—that is enough. In every community, and especially in the great cities, there are multitudes of people who once found joy and service in the Christian life who now never enter a church, do not read the Scriptures, or have any religious life whatsoever.

The career of Judas Iscariot needs to be studied afresh by every minister, every prominent Christian worker, every professed follower of Jesus Christ, as well as by those who have never named that Name which is above every name. There is a time in the life of every man and woman when the better nature will respond to the appeal of the highest. And there is, likewise, a place in the

process of deterioration when the invitations of Divine love and protests of the most appealing character, fall upon dull and listless ears. So it happened to Judas; so has it happened to thousands; so it may happen to many of us if we permit our souls to shrivel and close our hearts to God.

IF JUDAS WAS LOST IT WAS NOT BECAUSE HE BETRAYED HIS LORD, BUT HAVING BETRAYED HIM HE DESPAIRED OF FORGIVENESS. The Scriptures tell us that Judas, when he died, went to his own place. Wherever that place was, there he went. But the tragedy of Judas is not his sin of betrayal, but rather his sin of despair, which led him not in penitence to Jesus' feet, but drove him to self-destruction. Christina Rossetti's lines are applicable to the case of the Man of Kerioth:

"A fall is not a signal to lie wallowing, but to rise.
It is not the signal I ought to choose, yet it is the signal
I have chosen,
Having chosen wrongly let me at least obey it rightly."

Peter's plight after his denial of Jesus was almost as pitiful as Judas', but Peter went out into the night to weep bitter tears of penitence and so came back to Christ. Judas came part of the way back, Peter all the way. Repentance, as taught in the Holy Scriptures, signifies a complete turn, a ceasing to do evil, a learning to do good. One may say that the beginning of repentance is a knowledge of sin; and that sorrow for sin is the

Half-Way House on the way back to forgiveness. Judas started back and got as far as the House of Sorrow, and there he stopped. In that Half-Way House, on the way to pardon, Judas bowed down by remorse, broken, undone, believed himself too vile to live and there his flickering light went out in darkness.

Peter went the whole way to repentance. He, too, came up to the Half-Way House of Sorrow, but journeyed on to the Palace of Forgiveness. Wise Peter, how we like to praise him! Poor Judas, how can we but pity him! If only he had gone back to his waiting Lord he would have found a reception such as awaited the prodigal son at his father's house. We ought never to despair of any man or woman; we ought always to be willing and anxious to lift up the fallen and rescue the perishing. But we shall fail of our bounden duty if we neglect to teach men that they can, if they choose, put themselves in such an attitude toward God that even God, Himself, cannot save them from themselves.

The case of Judas is sad enough to make angels weep, but no sadder than the case of multitudes of his nowaday disciples. To what humility and contrition should a study of the case of Judas bring us and how free from boastfulness and foolish pride should such a study leave us!

O CHRIST, FORGIVE US OUR WILLINGNESS TO HEAP OPPROBRIUM ON JUDAS ISCARIOT WHEN WE

OURSELVES HAVE FAILED THEE TIME AND TIME AGAIN. CONTRASTED WITH THINE OUR LIVES AT THEIR BEST ARE POOR AND MEAGRE. IN THE LIGHT OF THY LOVE MAY WE SO WALK THAT NO SHADOW OF TREASON SHALL EVER AGAIN FALL ATHWART THAT WAY WHICH SHINETH EVER.

IV

THE MINISTRY OF MEDIATION

"Would I suffer for one that I love? So wouldst thou, so wilt thou.
. . . He who did most shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak!
'Tis the weakness in strength, that I cry for! My flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that receives thee; a man like to me
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever; a hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

ROBERT BROWNING.

IV

THE MINISTRY OF MEDIATION

"Go thou near and hear all that Jehovah our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that Jehovah our God shall speak unto thee and we shall hear it and do it."—*Deuteronomy* 5:27.

THE scene is impressive. In the background is Mount Sinai lurid with lightning, overhung with smoke, resonant with thunder. Below in the plain are gathered the Israelitish people, fearful, wondering. Up into the fastness of the mountain that might not be touched, Moses makes his way and there he stands listening to the voice of God. On the one hand, and afar off, the Israelitish host; on the other, the symbols of God's presence; and between Israel and Jehovah is Moses, the Mediator.

A mediator, a "go-between," how old the idea, how perennially fresh the need! This idea of mediation and of mediator is woven all through the warp and woof of the Jewish religion, and for that matter, more or less, through every religion. The Old Testament is full of it; the idea of priest and sacrifice, symbol and type of mediation is there; and the idea is also in the New Testament and is part of the Christian faith. To a greater or lesser degree the idea of mediation is recognized

by all Christian communions, embodied in liturgy, in hymnology, and forms of worship. In some churches the idea of mediation is strongly stressed and the office of mediator clothed with special power and dignity. But quite apart from the formal and priestly office, Christendom recognizes this truth of mediation and applies it in countless ways.

The Christian ministry, as conceived by all churches, has in it something of the mediatorial nature. Whether the minister be called pastor, or priest, or preacher, or rector, or missionary, or evangelist, or chaplain, he is a mediator and part of his work is mediation. As the Israelites said to Moses, so likewise a congregation of Christians say in effect to their minister: "Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it." Not that the ministerial office, as we conceive it, has, in and of itself, any special approach to God that other Christians have not, but that it affords unique opportunities for study of the Holy Scriptures, for reflection and communion with God. When a church selects a minister it is as though the membership representing various vocations should say to him: "We are a busy people; we are busy in home and in store and in shop; we believe in God, we wish to know more of His will. Go thou near and hear what the Lord our God shall say, speak

thou unto us all that the Lord shall speak unto thee, and we will hear and do it."

On reflection, it must impress us all as a wise provision that God has chosen as mediators human beings and so subject to all the vicissitudes to which mankind is heir. Moses, Israel's mediator, was very human. Chosen as he was and trained for his special work to lead Israel, and to act as mediator between them and God, he was from among their people, blood of their blood, and bone of their bone. And in that very fact is one secret and power of his mediation. If angels preached the gospel to us doubtless their preaching would be better than man's, but the likelihood is that the appeal of the gospel as preached by angels would be less effective than when it comes by the lips of a fellow-mortal. A glorious company of angels proclaiming the Word of God would be a splendid spectacle, but not nearly so persuasive as that same gospel preached by Paul battling with the thorn in his flesh; or Peter struggling with his impetuous nature, or John seeking to control the tempestuous temper that so beset him in his early days.

Recently I read an article on "New Ideals of Church Leadership," in which the author said: "If the church is to have power it must have leaders who are specialists; if it is to have an edifying pulpit, an efficient pastorate, a successful business management, and satisfactory music, it

must have these departments headed by specialists. Let one man with a gift for preaching be employed to do nothing else; let another with special qualifications for pastoral work visit the members; let the finances of the church be shaped by specialists; and let the music director have charge of all the music of the congregation." I am in sympathy with the spirit of the writer and in hearty agreement with some of his suggestions. I think I understand, in part at least, the conditions that moved him to suggest such division of church leadership. It is true that no minister can preach with power who is worn mentally and physically by heavy detail and routine duties. The relieving him of such burdens is not only right but is absolutely necessary if the prophetic function of the pulpit be realized in messages of power. Yet, I question the wisdom of appointing a man to preach and to do nothing else. Undoubtedly, he might prepare fine and finished sermons and entertaining lectures, but I am not at all sure that he would be able to interpret the voice of God to his people. Moses went into the Holy Mount, but he did not remain there; he returned to the people, and he returned not merely to deliver his message but to mingle with them and help bear their burdens. Moses had numerous helpers, but he bore the burden of his people's needs and that burden was often heavy on his heart. Therefore, his mediation was the better, the stronger, the truer, I think.

Once I listened to a great preacher in his own pulpit when he was as the Holy Spirit set to music. He was a fit vessel for the Master's use that morning; he had heard Jehovah and with winsome power he told us what he had heard. The sermon thrilled through and through; it made me feel that nothing is worth having save God in the soul. I heard this man again in his pulpit when he was worn and weary and his thought was rather commonplace. His personality was not magnetic as before. He preached with evident difficulty and the sermon was uphill work all the way through. I realized that the preacher was not at his best and perceived that he was mediating God's Word to the people under very great disadvantages, and that very fact drew the messenger to me by bonds of sympathy. I said to myself: "Here is a man carrying the burdens of a very large congregation; he has been listening to the story of loss and sorrow all week; he has been overtaxed; the virtue has gone out of him. He is one with us in the great common experiences of life; he is mediating between us and God, as best he can, the Word of Jehovah and to build us up in the faith that saves."

I am not excusing dullness on a minister's part; on the contrary, if the dullness be through indolence, it is not excusable. A preacher who is dull and listless and commonplace because he is indolent is positively harmful. Such a man has no place in the pulpit. But Moses mediating Jehovah

to the children of Israel, sometimes with breaking heart, sometimes weary in mind and body, is a figure at once majestic and potent. There is something beautiful, even helpful, in the spectacle of a Christian minister who, like Moses, speaks for Jehovah; and like him, sometimes in stress and anxiety, mediates his message through a personality weighed down by ministrations in behalf of mankind.

If I were a member of a congregation sitting in the pew Sunday after Sunday, I would give the weight of my influence in behalf of the minister's release from much of the routine work of church management, but I would not want him to live apart over much from his people. I would not want him on the mount all the week, coming down only on Sunday to preach. I would want him in the mount of silence and contemplation long enough to hear the voice of Jehovah; but I would want him, also, down on the plain with the people as was Moses in the long ago. No mediator can remain in the mount and mediate God's truth. Down below are the people who are needing to hear of what has taken place in the mountain fastness where, face to face, the mediator has communed with the Invisible. Robert Louis Stevenson's "Will o' the Mill," lived high up on a mountain side and watched the world go by. Below him the people came and went, below him men and women and children lived and loved and

died. High up, almost amidst the clouds, "Will o' the Mill" lived and died. He communicated nothing to the world, he was not a mediator; he lived and moved and had his being apart from the people, beyond them, aloof and alone. The ministry of mediation requires contact and communion with God first, and then contact and communion with God's children.

"Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall say." There is a fine art of hearing. "Take heed how ye hear," is one of Jesus' warnings. For myself, I confess a difficulty in hearing; the subtle temptation which besets me is to hear a little and talk a great deal. One of the ever present perils of a preacher is that he become a parrot, that he wax voluble, and his message grow wordy rather than weighty. It is a great privilege to be a "Voice;" John the Baptist was a Voice and he was a prophet. It is easier to become a "mouth," to be a word-monger, instead of a word-mediator.

"Go thou near and hear all that the Lord our God shall say." This privilege belongs not only to the minister but to every Christian. All that has been affirmed in this study with reference to the ministry is true also of the laity. Theoretically, most of us believe in the mediatorship of every believer. Practically, we ignore it. In Sunday School or Prayer Meeting talk we are sure that Christ has commissioned every believer

to go and make other disciples. In the hurly-burly of everyday life we act as though we bore no such high commission. The New Testament, and particularly the Hebrew Epistle, teaches the priesthood of every Christian. To be a priest under the old Jewish order was a very great honour; an honour and a dignity which in the old order could belong to only a few may, under the new, be bestowed upon the humblest follower of Christ. If every Christian is a priest, then two things follow: First, he has the priestly prerogative which is the right to go to God without hindrance. Our word for his priceless privilege is the short and simple term "prayer"—prayer for one's self, prayer for others. Second, if every Christian is a priest, then the priestly function is his and that is to offer sacrifice. Not the burnt offerings as under the old Jewish order, but sacrificial ministry of a life dedicated to God through Christ. The Apostle Paul, in Romans 12:1, sums up the matter superbly: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service." And in the Hebrew Epistle, 13:15, the idea is finely expressed: "Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

Truly, we are called to be mediators of the new covenant and, higher calling than this there is not in all the world. Yet, even so, they are incomplete, they are partial, and not altogether successful. The frailties of human nature make the mediation of human beings imperfect. The mediatorship of Moses was not perfect. And this brings us to the recognition of that universal yearning of humanity for a mediator between God and man that shall be complete, lacking in nothing, perfect. God seems so far distant, so awful, so almighty; man so small, so futile, so feeble. Who, or what, shall bridge the great gulf? Job sets forth this longing of mankind eloquently when out of his deep distress he cries:

> "God is not a man that I should answer him,
> There is no daysman betwixt us
> That might lay his hand upon us both.
> Then would I speak and not fear him."

This is the cry of all humanity, and this great cry God has answered in Jesus Christ. Christ fulfills every longing of the human heart; He is the "daysman" or "umpire" for whom Job longed; He is betwixt us and the Father; and He lays, so to speak, one understanding hand upon the Father and one understanding hand upon us. He is the answer to Phillip's pathetic plaint: "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." A wonderful reach this Mediator has; He reaches through the vast spaces and lays hold upon God; He reaches

down into the vast depth to the fartherest fallen humanity. His humanity commends Him to us; He was of us and is one with us, and He is of God and one with God. All the mediators between God and man, all the great line of prophets, were conscious of limitations, were sensible of sin; but here is One unbroken by sin and having His being in closest fellowship with the Father, One whose mediation is without flaw.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews has appraised this Mediator aright, has set Him before us at once as the highest and lowliest. In Scripture that ought to be memorized by every follower of the Lord Christ, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews writes: "We have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in time of need."

Speaking by and large, the Scriptures record on the one hand the ascent of man, and on the other hand the descent of God. That is to say: the Scriptural narratives show man reaching out after God "if haply they might feel after him and find him," to use Paul's meaningful phrase in his speech on Mars Hill. And, the Scriptures also show God's descent; said Jesus: "I am come down out of heaven;" and so it comes to pass

that God's reaching out to man and man's reaching out after God—that these two endeavours meet in Jesus Christ. A mediation Godward and manward, satisfactory, sustaining, incomparable. Whatever theology one may have of the work and office of Jesus Christ, every sincere student of His life must concede this mediatorial ministry of the Nazarene. The world has never been the same since Jesus came; life has never been precisely as it was before; death has lost somewhat its darkness and its tragedy.

The Old Testament looks forward to a better mediator than Moses. The types and figures and shadows of the old Jewish system are fulfilled and given substance in the life and ministry of our Lord. Alongside of the Old Testament books of Exodus and Deuteronomy, the epistle to the Hebrews should be ranged and compared. The epistle to the Hebrews has one great theme and one alone, and that is to show the superiority of Christianity over Judaism, of Christ over Moses. If the account of Moses at Mount Sinai, mediating between God and Israel, is impressive, the record of the mediation of the New Covenant is surpassing beautiful. Alongside of Exodus, the nineteenth and twentieth chapters, and Deuteronomy, the fourth and fifth chapters, with their terrifying descriptions of Sinai and the awestruck Israelitish hosts, should be placed the twelfth chapter of Hebrews and that ineffable description of the new

mediation accomplished with beauty and grace in Jesus Christ. "For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; for they could not endure that which was enjoined. If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the appearance that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake; but ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel."

I have read lately Henry Sienkieicz's little booklet entitled: "Let Us Follow Him." I like much that title, "Let Us Follow Him," for to follow Him is to go near, yea, very near, to the Lord our God; to venture unafraid into the vasty deeps of the Spirit; to follow Him is to hear a voice speaking like the Voice of Many Waters; to follow Him is to come down from the mountain and from out of the silence into the very midst of the noisy multitude; to follow Him is to minister to men and women storm-tossed, sin-smitten,

terribly-tempted, and all but undone; to follow Him is to mediate God's forgiveness and restoration to the Father's House of many Mansions.

OH CHRIST, THOU GREAT MEDIATOR, THOU WHO ART ONE WITH THE FATHER AND ONE WITH US ALSO, "GO THOU NEAR AND HEAR ALL THAT JEHOVAH OUR GOD SHALL SAY AND SPEAK THOU UNTO US ALL THAT JEHOVAH OUR GOD SHALL SPEAK UNTO THEE, AND WE SHALL HEAR AND DO IT."

V

FAITH AND FORTITUDE

"I have closed the door on Doubt;
I will go by what light I can find,
And hold up my hands, and reach them out
To the glimmer of God in the dark and call:
'I am thine, though I grope and stumble and fall,
I serve; and thy service is kind.'

"I have closed the door on Fear.
He has lived with me far too long.
If he were to break forth and reappear,
I should lift my eyes and look at the sky,
And sing aloud, and run lightly by;
He will never follow a song.

"I have closed the door on Gloom.
His house has too narrow a view.
I must seek for my soul a wider room,
With windows to open and let in the sun.
And radiant lamps when the day is done,
And the breeze of the world blowing through."

British Weekly.

V

FAITH AND FORTITUDE

"For we walk by faith, not by sight."—*II Corinthians* 5:7.

THE second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians is a most human document. Students of the Scriptures are of the opinion that nowhere else do we get so close to the heart of the great Apostle as in this letter. Having dispatched his first Epistle to the Corinthians by the hand of Titus, Paul awaited the news of its reception with no small anxiety. Six months passed and then in Macedonia he met Titus, who reported that the Corinthian Christians had received the Epistle cordially and immediately set about the accomplishment of the reform advised by Paul. This information greatly encouraged the Apostle and he at once wrote the second Epistle, the first part of which is given over to expressions of gratitude and affection.

The Apostle's gratitude overflows like a river in time of flood. He is sure of God. He walks by faith. Whatever his weakness, he rests upon the Divine power of the Everlasting Arms. His anxieties have been more than compensated for by the willingness of the Christians at Corinth to

correct the abuses that had crept into the church there, and by the repentance of wrongdoers.

The closing verses of the fourth chapter are as a mighty river approaching the sea, and the opening verses of the fifth are as old ocean itself. Paul was never more eloquent. He refers to his affliction as light and only for a moment, which will be transmuted into an eternal weight of glory. The decay of the outward man, he explains, means the growth of the inward man, and as the temporal fades away the eternal becomes more and more luminous and glorious. Then the Apostle sets forth a most enchanting view of death. He believes that as the bodily frame fades and dissolves, it exposes to view a building from God, eternal in the heavens. The tent gives away to the mansion, the mortal body to a spiritual body; it is as though there is a body within a body, as the one decays the other grows and at death the spiritual emerges from the physical. The mortal is swallowed up of life. The poet builds upon Paul's words for his great lines:

> "This body is my house, it is not I;
> Herein I sojourn till in some far sky
> I lease a fairer dwelling, built to last
> Till all the carpentry of earth is past."

This servant of Christ is constantly thinking of his Lord and of his meeting Him shortly face to face and he writes: "Whilst we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord." And

here it is that he throws in by way of parenthesis the words of the text: "For we walk by faith, not by sight," and affirms that he and his fellow-workers make it their aim whether at home (with Christ) or absent (from Christ), to be well pleasing unto Him.

"For we walk by faith, and not by sight." That we do, and not only in the sense of the Apostle's use of the word here, but likewise in another sense of the term we walk by faith every day of our lives. It is not optional with us, we are compelled so to walk; our daily affairs are done by faith—not necessarily faith in God, but faith in one another, faith in institutions, faith in organizations, faith in something. Two or three homely instances of this fact are in order.

A man takes a long journey; he plans to cross the continent. He will travel in the course of that journey several thousand miles, and he will perforce travel by faith. A train on which he is riding may be wrecked and his life crushed out. A hotel in which he is sleeping may burn and consume him. He may become ill on the way and die far away from home and friends. There are a dozen ways in which his life may be lost or his body bruised and mangled on that journey. He will simply have to make that journey by faith. True, if he is a wise man he will minimize all the risks and safeguard his life and facilitate his travelling in every way possible; he will purchase his

ticket over the best road, or roads; he will run no unnecessary risks; he will attempt to keep himself in the best physical condition. And yet, withal, he will have to make that trip by faith.

Here are two men who are about to embark in business. They have formed a partnership. They purpose to establish a store or a manufacturing concern, and they are compelled to do this by faith. They are running certain risks—one of the partners may prove dishonest, they may be unable to establish their credit, they may not be able to keep pace with the fierce current of competition. And inasmuch as above ninety per cent. of business enterprises fail, they are certainly making a venture of faith. If they are wise men, however, they will reduce their risk to a minimum; each will endeavor to satisfy himself as to the integrity of his partner; both of them will look well to their credit; they will consider the wisdom of a good location; they will be cautious in outlays and seek to keep expenses down. But even so, they will have to make their business venture by faith.

Here are two young people about to build a home—not a house, but a home—an enterprise that calls for faith at one of its highest ventures. There are a hundred and one things that may make that home-building process a wreck and ruin. They may be incompatible in temperament and unable to live in peace; one or the other may be extravagant; their kins-

people may interfere and bring about annoyance and domestic infelicity; sickness or adversity may come and death may leave husband or wife to face the future with a family of helpless little ones and no money. If they are wise young people they will reduce these risks to a minimum. They will not let the little blind god delude them and they will be reasonably certain that they can live together happily and usefully. They will have some outlook financially before they make a venture so important as this; and they will, if they are wise, deal gently and patiently with any family relationship that might threaten to mar their marital happiness. Yet, even so, they will have to build their home and plan their wedded life by faith.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight." Indeed we do, otherwise we cannot walk at all. We live every day of our lives by faith. We get up in the morning by faith, and at night we lie down to sleep by faith. We mail letters by faith; we send telegrams by faith. We eat and drink by faith. We sow and plant by faith. We choose the family physician by faith, and engage the service of an attorney by faith. A congregation of Christians call a minister by faith and he in turn enters upon his pastorate by faith.

Not only do we live by faith daily and walk by faith hourly and conduct our business and build our homes and take our place in society by

faith, but every now and then our faith receives a tremendous shock. Men and women in whom we have had faith disappoint us and fail us, and some betray us with a "Judas Kiss." Institutions in which we have believed with all our heart go down over night to wreck and ruin. Organizations in which we put our faith disintegrate and dissolve in failure. Yet, nevertheless, while these experiences are not uncommon, they are the exceptions rather than the rule and despite them we continue to walk by faith, for if we try to walk otherwise our days of usefulness are ended and we are stranded on the barren shores of doubt and distress.

"For we walk by faith, not by sight." In the sense that Paul meant this we walk by faith scarcely more than in the daily conduct of business and home and our relation in society in general. Strangely enough, (or is it strange?) when we turn to the realm of the unseen and consideration of the great questions: "Whence am I?"—"Whither am I bound?" we are prone to stumble and to stop at the very thought of walking by faith. We want to see, we want to know. We crave certainty. We plead for proof. And little wonder! The mystery of life perplexes us. We come into this world and we are not here very long until we learn that it is a world of inequalities, of tears, of pain, and of suffering. We look about us and we see that righteousness is not al-

ways rewarded here. We behold some of the best and most unselfish souls suffering poverty and heavy affliction. We see others who do not live lives of honesty and sobriety and helpfulness, yet they are prosperous and live in luxury. We see some men and women bearing grievous burdens of mental and physical stress who deserve the best that life can bestow; we see death strike down the most useful members of society and leave untouched for years characters that are worthless to themselves and to the community. And we are perplexed, we are sorely distressd, we wonder why?

"This is the cry
That echoes through the wilderness of earth,
Through song and sorrow, day of death and birth;
'Why?'

"It is the high
Wail of the child when all his life to face,
Man's last dumb question as he reaches space;
'Why?'"

Frankly, there are only two ways that we can meet these vicissitudes of life and the mystery of death,—one is to try to think them through, to reason them out,—and the other is to meet them in simple faith, believing where we cannot prove.

And if we are wise men and women we will do in this great matter as we are doing daily in other matters. We will take advantage of every provision for the life of faith in God. Princely

provision has been made for us; the Father hath sent His Son, and the Son has shed upon life's dark mysteries a great and mellow light. His was a life of faith, and such a faith the world has never known before nor since. It was steadfast and stable. It was captivating and contagious. He was sure of God, Jesus was. No experience, however dark, could hide the Father's love. For a single brief period on the Cross, enshrouded by thick clouds, He thought Himself forsaken and then, breaking out of the darkness, light and love from the Father flooded His soul. With this Father He lived in daily communion, He conversed with Him freely; He found a fellowship with Him unto the end. Even so, the life of our Lord was fraught with suffering, and the author of the Hebrew Epistle declares that He was made "perfect through sufferings." Jesus' faith triumphed over pain, over misunderstanding, over malignment, over rejection, over the Cross, over the grave. As faith saves us, so faith saved our Saviour. The great Founder of the Christian faith did not accept the dilemma that if God is good He is not Almighty, and if He is Almighty He is not good. He taught and believed that God is both.

A study of Jesus in Gethsemane should help us all to walk by faith the sorrowful way over which, sometimes, our feet must go. It was in the Garden that the great souls of earth have come to know

God best. It is in the Garden that we shall meet the ministering angels. The Apostle, from whose letter the text is taken, declares to the church at Rome that " to them that love God all things work together for good." " Work together for good," yes, but this process is a long one and we cannot see the end now. And yet there are those who have lived long enough to know that some experiences which overwhelmed at the time with grief were for the best. Before we can determine that loss and separation and death of dearly beloved have in them naught but ill we must survey them from a distance, we must view them from the high hills of hope where the horizons widen wonderfully. Time is a sure and stalwart vindicator of all God's plans.

Some years ago I was talking with a business man who was sorely perplexed and distressed. There had taken place in our community the sudden, though not unexpected, death of a splendid man in the full strength of mature life, a man of integrity, of keen insight, and a citizen of high ideals and wide influence. The man who had died was formerly a business associate of the man with whom I was conversing. We were speaking about his untimely death, the brave fight he had made for life, and the business man voiced the doubt and difficulty of thousands when he said to me with some emotion: " I cannot understand it. Walking the streets of our city this morning are men

that you and I know are worthless. They are hindrances instead of helps both to their families and to the community. Some of these men humiliate and even harm their families, and yet they are living today and this good man is dead. It is all dark and doubtful, and I cannot think my way through it." I did not answer him at once. I could not. But after a little silence I replied: "No, we cannot think our way through a problem of this kind. We have to *trust* our way through. We have to walk by faith." And I remember his serious face and how he solemnly shook his head as he said: "Yes, I suppose that is the best way, but it is not an easy way." Then a silence fell upon us again. At some time or another I dare say we all feel as this man felt. Faith is seldom, if ever, easy at first. Yet even so, the way of faith is easier than the way of doubt, which darkens more and more to the dismal night, while faith shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

I recall a memorable conversation I once had with a man for whom I cherish an abiding affection. We were talking of this problem of suffering, of separation, and of death; and he told me that many years ago his sister, after a little more than a year of married life, died in a far Western state, leaving a motherless babe. He described to me the coming of the funeral party to the old home of the young woman. It was in midwinter

and the snow lay upon the face of the earth. He said he recalled that together with other members of the family he sat up until midnight talking in subdued tones of their great loss, the first great loss that had come to that home. He told me that his sister was one of the most beautiful characters he had ever known and that it seemed to him and the other members of the family that if either the mother or the child had to die it would have been better that the beautiful life of the young mother be spared. He said they welcomed tenderly the little life to that home, yet cherishing still the feeling, in those first days of bitter grief, that it would have been far better had the child died and the mother lived. That was more than thirty years ago, so he told me, and the child had grown into sturdy manhood and useful career, and he said: "My sister has spoken through the life of her son and through him served the world as she perhaps never could have done had the child died and her life been prolonged for many years."

The testimony of that earnest man is eloquent, but not so eloquent as the fact that thirty years of his life were necessary before he could bear such witness. By faith we must walk else we shall faint and fall by the way. With John Henry Newman let us learn to say: "I do not ask to see the distant scene, one step enough for me."

Faith? What is faith? Like love and light and truth, it is a hard word to define. Some have called

faith the sixth sense—the eyes of the soul—the sense of the unseen. Yet, while faith is difficult to define, it readily yields to illustration. And I can recall no lovelier illustration of faith than a letter written by Robert J. Burdette on the bed of pain, from which that preacher-poet went to be with his Lord not long after his tired fingers penned these words:

"Ever since June, 1912, when I made my last public appearance, we have been living in our summer home down here by the sea. 'Eventide,' Mrs. Burdette named it, because it faces the sunset. It is very pleasant, this 'afternoon land,' in spite of sickness. I watch the sunset as I look out over the rim of the blue Pacific, and there is no mystery beyond the horizon line, because I know what there is over there. I have been there. I have journeyed in those lands. Over there where the sun is just sinking is Japan. That star is rising over China. In that direction lie the Philippines. I know all that. Well, there is another land that I look toward as I watch the sunset. I have never seen it. I have never seen any one who has been there; but it has a more abiding reality than any of these lands which I do know. This land beyond the sunset—this land of immortality, this fair and blessed country of the soul,—why, this Heaven of ours is the one thing in the world which I know with absolute, unshaken, unchangeable certainty. This I know with a knowledge that is

never shadowed by a passing cloud of doubt. I may not always be certain about this world; my geographical locations may sometimes become confused. But that other world,—that I know. And as the afternoon sun sinks lower, Faith shines more clearly; and hope, lifting her voice in a higher key, sings the songs of fruition."

What music that! What a swan song of the soul! And who but a follower of the Christ could so shout " Halleluiah " in the presence of death?

" O MASTER, LET ME WALK WITH THEE
IN LOWLY PATHS OF SERVICE FREE;
TELL ME THY SECRET; HELP ME BEAR
THE STRAIN OF TOIL, THE FRET OF CARE."

VI

THE MIDDLE ESTATE

"Something kindlier, higher, holier,
All for each and each for all.
Earth at last a warless world,
A single race, a single tongue.

"Every tiger madness muzzled,
Every serpent passion killed,
Every grim ravine a garden,
Every blazing desert tilled.

"Robed in universal harvest,
Up to either pole she smiles;
Universal ocean softly
Washing all her warless isles."

PERCY C. AINSWORTH.

VI

THE MIDDLE ESTATE

"Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God."—*Proverbs* 30:8-9.

THESE are the words of Agur, an ancient sage whose epigrams are contained in the thirtieth chapter of Proverbs. This is the only place in the Holy Scriptures where his name occurs. The fragment of his writings, however, that has come down to us is bold and brilliant. His proverbs are of the pungent, easily-remembered sort. His literary style is very effective. A favourite device in the writings of this wise man is to arrange his subject-matter in numbers, thus: "Two things have I required of thee;"—"There be three things which are too wonderful for me;"—"Three things that are never satisfied;"—"There be four things which are little upon the earth but they are exceeding wise." It is interesting to know that some students of this thirtieth chapter of Proverbs have found in places a similarity to the style of the Book of Job. In the midst of this chapter occurs Agur's audacious prayer:—"Give me neither poverty nor riches;

feed me with the food, that is needful for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is Jehovah? or lest I be poor, and steal, and use profanely the name of my God."

"Give me neither poverty nor riches." Verily, this is an audacious prayer, for there have been those who held that poverty was a virtue, and there are others who reckon riches to be life's most desirable possession. On the one hand are those who wrote in praise of poverty, the many sincere Christians of the Middle Age taking vows of poverty and subsisting all of their lives on the simplest, even the meanest of food, going barefooted and wearing only the coarsest and plainest of garments. Typical and representative of this extreme at its best is St. Francis of Assisi, a lover of his Lord, whose conception of Christianity resulted in stripping himself of all his earthly possessions, owning nothing save great good will toward all creatures.

Contrariwise, one can easily recall certain well-known names of these latter days who also claim the Christ as Lord and Master, whose wealth in stocks and bonds and other holdings aggregates many millions. One such there is, and a most devout churchman, who is unable to reckon accurately his own possessions, so great they are both in intrinsic and potential values. Christendom, as a whole, has never been consistent in its attitude toward riches. In the words of a reverent but

eminently fair-minded student of Christianity: "The preaching of the church against wealth has been equaled only by its zeal to obtain it."

St. Francis of Assisi has few modern disciples and there is little likelihood of his extreme position finding acceptance in our modern world which estimates success so largely in the terms of silver and gold, of lands and stocks. There are few to speak in praise of poverty these days; there are many to speak in praise of wealth. But here is this comparatively unknown wise man of Old Testament times offering a most unconventional prayer:—"Give me," he prayed, "neither poverty nor riches." Agur was a philosopher, a shrewd observer. He looked about him and studied the lives of his contemporaries; he reflected upon their manner of living, and so discerned clearly the dangers of riches and the perils of poverty. And thus observing, he wanted to be saved from the danger of both, and choosing the middle estate prayed neither for the one nor for the other.

"Neither poverty nor riches." This was Agur's conclusion, and the sanity of his logic was perhaps never so apparent as today. Consider how perilous is the problem presented by extreme poverty. Robert Hunter, in his work entitled "Poverty," estimates that there are ten millions of America's population living daily on the brink of poverty's abyss. Ten millions—one-tenth of our population—are living from hand to mouth, eking out a

sterile existence. Out of such a condition emerge some of the most ominous of our country's perils. Poverty is a breeder of disease, a fosterer of crime, a destroyer of efficiency, a blighter of hope, a fruitful source of pain and suffering, a slayer of ambition, an enemy of good. Where one person rises from abject poverty and forges to the front, nine perhaps fall by the way. There is a point somewhere in living, below which the lack of sufficient clothing, the lack of wholesome food, the lack of comfortable homes, means inefficiency, disease, pain, despair, and suffering. Of a vast multitude it has been true that

> "Chill penury repressed their noble rage,
> And froze the genial current of the soul."

Agur saw the peril of poverty and he shrank from its approach. He feared the meagre existence that it offered would drive him to take that which belonged to others; he dreaded penury lest it would make him profane and call upon the name of God in derision. And who will say he was not wise in his wish to be spared the hopeless struggle with want?

Reflect on the matter of excessive riches; the perils of great possessions have been acknowledged by the candid minds of every generation. The Bible is a storehouse of admonitions against the perils of riches; the entire Book of Proverbs scintillates with warnings against the temptations of

great prosperity. Jesus warned His hearers precept upon precept against the power of Mammon, and of all His recorded sayings none is more singularly impressive or more difficult to explain away than His words: "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God." Paul said that the love of money was a root of all kinds of evil; and in the same letter, his first epistle to Timothy, he writes: "But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition." Money assures power and endows its possessor with gilded prestige. Great possessions put into the hands of their owners both weapons of defense and offense. The rich are a law unto themselves. It is commonly believed that money can buy anything. A multimillionaire, in an article published some years ago by a popular American monthly, wrote as follows: "We have only to think of what we want to get it. After a bit we begin to wonder why we do not get as much pleasure out of things we wanted as we thought we should before we had them."

Unquestionably, there is a point above which the accumulation of property and the piling up of wealth becomes a source of perplexity and productive of evil. The book lover may have too many books; the farmer too many acres of land; the capitalist too big a fortune; the preacher too

large a church. There is a "Great Divide" in the matter of accumulating anything beyond which accretion only adds burden and anxiety. And there is, likewise, a definite period in loss and depletion below which too little is as perilous to life at its best as the opposite experience of too much. Agur recognized the hazard of the two extremes. He feared that riches would puff him up with pride and make him a doubter and lead him to ask, Who is the Lord? Likewise, he was afraid of abject poverty lest it would make him a thief and a blasphemer of Almighty God. Therefore, he prayed for the Middle Estate.

The Middle Estate—neither poverty nor riches. Direst poverty and exuberant opulence,—how vivid the contrast of the two extremes! The Submerged Tenth and the Upper Ten; Fifth Avenue and Five Points; London's West End and London's East End; Silk Stocking Row and Poverty Flats; the perilously thin crust and the lower layer trembling with impending eruption! However, the connection between these two extremes is much closer than we are prone to believe.

When the top of our social structure trembles with some new experience of luxury, simultaneously the bottom quivers in pain. When the ill-fated *Lusitania* made her first trip across the Atlantic much publicity was given to the luxury of her apartments and her speed was a ten days' marvel. But the newspapers did not announce

at the time that the *Lusitania's* turbine engines, in order to justify her speed, were requiring such terrific heat in the furnaces that the stokers were frequently overcome and resuscitated only with difficulty.

Halfway between these two extremes is the Middle Estate, knowing neither abject poverty nor great riches. In this country we call that large section of the people who are neither very poor nor very rich the "middle class." In some parts of Europe this class is called the "gentry." In other parts the "burghers." A still better term for this most fortunate stratum of society is the substantial phrase "the middle estate." And it is the middle estate that has thus far been the bulwark of civilization; with rare exception it is from the middle estate that our most successful leaders and our most efficient workers have come. Sickness, disease, and inefficiency strike down tens of thousands of poverty stricken; idleness, extravagance and excesses sap the strength and waste the vitality of the over-rich.

How beneficent the issue if only a balance could be struck between the antipodes of society as now organized! If only those high up would come down, and those far below could climb up, to meet and mingle midway; if the full-blooded and vigorous but imparted their overplus to the anæmic and wasted; if those of abundant leisure but shared it with those to whom vacations never

come; if this "give and take" of life should come to pass, how beatific the sequence!

The abundant life is best attained where poverty cannot pinch nor wealth enervate. Thus Princess Stephanie of the unfortunate House of Hapsburgh writes in her memoirs: "Happiness depends on living naturally, and what increases our distance from nature decreases our happiness."

Once, when asked to act as arbiter in an inheritance case, Jesus replied: "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Thus a distinguished New York minister was accustomed to linger before the window displays of the metropolis during the gala holiday season in order to observe "how many things he could do without."

The class most susceptible to spiritual truth is the middle estate. The very poor and the very rich are the hardest to interest in religion, and this is true for various reasons. The very poor, because of their penury and want, question the existence of God and if He does exist they wonder if He knows and cares. Moreover, it is quite impossible to interest people in the spiritual when the physical conditions in which they are compelled to live are intolerable. It is difficult to interest a man in the Bread of Life when his stomach is fairly famished for a biscuit. It is not easy to talk to a woman about the Water of Life when

the water she must perforce drink daily is filthy and foul. The Divine order is: first, that which is natural, and then that which is spiritual. As for the very rich, their temptation is to put their trust in gold, to believe in bonds and stocks, to put their faith in lands and skyscrapers. In the midst of such plenitude God seems unnecessary and a trifling embarrassing. Indifference to the spiritual under such luxurious conditions is easy; the call of the motor, of the yacht, of the ocean liner, of the golf links, is ringing ever in their ears.

"Grown mad in the race for gold,
They are drunk with the wine of gain;
The truths their fathers proclaimed of old
Are spurned with a high disdain."

There are notable exceptions to this rule, both at the top and the bottom of society; there are persons of singularly pure and devout lives among the very rich, and there are saints of rare and lovely characters among the penniless. But such exceptions only accentuate the inhospitality of extreme poverty and excessive riches to spiritual things.

Abject poverty and abounding wealth; the very poor and the very rich;—how shall we account for such inequalities, such disparities, such extremes? Explanations are numerous and the causes given are many and diverse.

Time was when many planted the issue squarely

with God. They said: "It is God's will that some be poor and others be rich. It is not society's fault, it is God's decree." Not very many hold to such a view today. Such a belief is a gruesome travesty upon the interpretation of God that Jesus Christ brought the world. Not only so, but God in nature repudiates so hideous a theology.

"The dew, the rain and moonlight,
All prove our Father's mind.
The dew, the rain and moonlight
Descend to bless mankind."

Others have explained these extremes by affirming it to be a question of sheer personality, of pluck, of persistence. The difference between men, they tell us, is the difference in will power, in ambition, in initiative, in industry. This view also leaves the issue with the Creator, though not so candidly and directly as the first.

Another group assures us that the trouble has its source in the mind. Some are poor because they think poverty; others are rich because they think riches. Imperial thinking is good, but it has its limitations. If thinking riches would bring riches then everybody would be rich, for who of us has not longed for riches, and who does not abhor abject poverty?

Still others hold that the fundamental cause of poverty is land monopoly, and that as free access to the soil is deprived, poverty increases. This answer cuts deep and it is encouraging to know

that an increasing number of thoughtful persons are studying with profit the principles of the Single Tax.

But whatever the reason or the cause, these inequalities are here. They have been here a long time, but that is no reason that they are here to stay. Many centuries ago Agur observed the pernicious evils of these extremes and thus observing, offered his altogether out-of-the-ordinary prayer: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." What will bring about the meeting and the merging of these two extremes? What forces may be confidently expected to work out the solution of this vexatious condition of society?

The state, the school, the home, the church, must work it out together. At present all these forces are working, but not always together. Some are pulling one way and some another; but it is good to believe that underneath the apparent cross-currents there moves steadily but surely on toward the great ocean of human brotherhood and equal opportunity, a tide too full for sound or foam.

One thing is reasonably certain—outside forces alone can never bring about the meeting of these extremes. Outside agencies however potent, cannot of themselves bring about the amelioration of woes caused by wealth and want. Given every opportunity to realize life, health, and the pursuit of happiness, in a state free from the blight of penury and the peril of great riches, mankind, unregen-

erated by cleansing of the spiritual forces within, would fail tragically. For a single overwhelming illustration, read the history of the French Revolution. Sociologists, economists, statesmen, reformers, must remember to reckon with God, else their calculations will fail. Worldliness is something far more serious than indulgences in popular amusements; worldliness is a view of life without reckoning in the spiritual. Just here comes the great function of the church as an inspirer and the renewer of the spirit of God in man. Man, working through state and school, may fashion the body that is to bring about a more glorious and equitable social order; but it is religion that must breathe into that body the Spirit of Life. Men and women must be born from above before they can do their mightiest work here below; they must be impelled from within before they can be compelled from without.

It will not do for us to depend altogether upon law, upon statutes, or ordinances. If we expect laws to accomplish miracles we shall be disappointed. Like the Sabbath, laws are made for man, not man for laws. See to it that the inside of the cup is clean; cleanse the platter perfectly inside and out and all around. Enact wise and equable laws and alongside of such enactment let religion do her perfect work with man's inner life.

In the mighty anti-saloon movement now sweeping in triumphal march over the land, there lurks

a most subtle danger unless there shall be a correspondent movement in behalf of self-control, of clean and wholesome thinking, and of noble resolution on the part of the individual. Truism that it is, let it be said again and again that laws can help to make us good, but laws alone cannot redeem society. Temperance is the keystone of life; in all things not inherently wrong temperance is greater than abstinence; and when abstinence and indulgence meet and merge, temperance is the issue. Nevertheless, in society as it is now organized, abstinence must often replace temperance in order that the strong may bear the burdens of the weak.

"Neither poverty nor riches,"—the Middle Estate. Will these extremes ever meet? If wealth and want should wed what sort of a family would they rear? If riches and poverty should marry what would be the character of their children? If the House of Too Little and the House of Too Much should form a partnership could the new firm be called The House of Enough and To Spare? Is it only a dream that poverty—abject, pitiful poverty, and riches—excessive and lavish, shall some day merge into a middle estate? And, if abject poverty and excessive wealth should cease to be would humanity's struggles end? Undoubtedly not, for man was made to struggle; but his struggles then could be for a higher goal. The game would be different and the struggles not in

vain. Life would be more normal, more natural; consequently happier, holier. No nation half rolling in wealth and half pinched by direst poverty can long endure. If it is a disgrace for a man to die rich, as one of America's multi-millionaires has said, then it is society's disgrace that any man or woman die poor.

"Yea, we would give to each poor man
Ripe wheat and poppies red,—
A peaceful place at evening
With the stars just overhead.

"A net to snare the moonlight,
A sod spread to the sun,
A place of toil by daytime
Of dreams when toil is done."

From Agur's prayer to Jesus' programme for the Kingdom of God is a mighty stretch, a thousand years perhaps in time—in spirit a greater distance still. Agur prayed that he might be saved from either poverty or riches; Jesus announced a kingdom that would usher in a reign of brotherliness for all the world. Agur prayed: "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Jesus prayed: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." Agur's prayer was individualistic; Jesus' socialistic.

There is but one approach to the social question and that is the spirit of Him who would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

Calling down maledictions on the rich because they are rich, and berating the poor because they are poor, is both foolish and futile. The winsomest personalities in all the world are those like Abou Ben Adhem, who love their fellowmen and love them, too, regardless of their lot, their ancestry, their character, or their creed. It is this fine quality that makes Dr. V. Vivian, hero of "V. V.'s Eyes," so irresistible. Behold "V. V." of the farseeing eyes, quaint Doctor of the Dabney House district; behold him addressing the mass meeting assembled to consider the needs of the poor, and listen to the music of his Saviour-like speech:

"The things in which we are all alike are so much bigger than the things in which we are different. What's rich and poor to a common beginning and a common end, common sufferings, common dreams? We look at these big freeholds, and money in banks is a little thing. On Washington Street and down behind the Dabney House, —don't we each alike seek the same thing? We want life, and more life. We want to be happy, and we want to be free. Well—we know it's hard to win these prizes when we're poor, but is it so easy when we're rich? To live shut off on a little island, calling the rest common and unclean—is that being happy and free, is it having life abundantly? I look around and don't find it so. And that's sad, isn't it?—double frustation, the poor

disinherited by their poverty, the rich in their riches. Don't you think we shall find a common meeting place some day, where these two will cancel out?—when reality will touch hands with the poet's ideal:

"And the stranger hath seen in the stranger
His brother at last,
And his sister in eyes that were strange."

IMPARTIAL FATHER OF US ALL, SENDER OF SUN AND RAIN ALIKE ON JUST AND UNJUST, WE LONG TO LOVE LIKE THEE. NEITHER FOR POVERTY NOR RICHES DO WE PRAY "BUT TO DO JUSTLY, TO LOVE MERCY, AND TO WALK HUMBLY" WITH THEE ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES EVEN AS WE HAVE LEARNED OF JESUS CHRIST.

VII

PRAISEWORTHY PRODIGALITY

"Unfinished! 'tis an echo still
That haunts us at our daily task;
Sometimes we do not know God's will,
Sometimes we do not dare to ask.

"Mayhap, what seems so incomplete
Is finished in the thought divine,
While self-wrought work laid at His feet,
Is but an ill-begun design.

"There is no 'broken hour' to God,
No 'interruption' in His plan,
And if we take the path He trod
We find revealed His will for man."

HELEN F. BOYDEN.

VII

PRAISEWORTHY PRODIGALITY

"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."—*Ecclesiates* 11:1.

THE Book of Ecclesiastes belongs to that portion of the Bible known as the Wisdom Literature. To the same portion belong also the Books of Job and Proverbs. Evidently, the purpose of Ecclesiastes is to narrate the experience of a man who set out to find happiness. The book has in it a strain of pessimism. The author tries knowledge and finds it vain; he experiments with pleasures and discovers them to be empty; he pursues the novel only to find that there is nothing new under the sun; he accumulates riches and confesses that they are but a bauble. In the end, however, the author sums up his experiences with the sensible advice that "to fear God and keep His commandments is the whole *duty* or *happiness* of man."

Scattered throughout the Book of Ecclesiastes are some wholesome sentiments and sprightly epigrams. For example: "A good name is better than precious ointment." "Whatsoever thy hand find to do, do it with thy might." "Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before

the evil days come and the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them." "It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting." "The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong." But of all the epigrams in Ecclesiastes there is none more interesting, nor more striking, than the first verse of the eleventh chapter—"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

Two explanations of this curious expression have been made. Some have thought that there is in this verse an allusion to the sowing of rice or other grain from a boat during the inundation of certain Eastern rivers, especially the Nile. Sown thus on the surface of the water the grain sinks to the bottom and there finds a resting place in the silt and rich alluvium where, after the waters have receded, is brought forth, by-and-bye, abundant harvest.

This explanation is interesting, but the other one is also, and much more likely to be correct. In the East bread is commonly made in thin, flat cakes and these thrown out upon the stream would float for a while, then sink, and unlike the grain would yield no return. To throw bread away, especially in the far East, is an extravagance. So apparently, are many of the services we render to others. We should do good, hoping for nothing in return. As foolish as throwing precious bread upon the water some ministrations may seem to

be; and the teaching of this text is to persevere in such ministrations despite the hopelessness of any recompense, for sometime there will be, nay, more there shall be, reward for every sincere benefactor. I fancy this is the meaning of the metaphor: "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Investigation of the teaching of this text in human affairs will lead us into a realm where truth is stranger than fiction.

Whosoever follows out this teaching is a prodigal, yet praiseworthily so, a blessed spendthrift; and the apparent wastefulness of his ministrations is in reality the soundest spiritual economy. Hearken unto the glory of such prodigality in humanity's behalf.

Years ago a certain Methodist bishop, now famous, was the successful pastor of a large church. In the midst of his busy ministry he found himself unable to decide on any theme for his Sunday morning sermon. It was a busy week with him, the days passed swiftly, and he came up to Friday with no morning theme selected. Late Friday evening he sat down amongst his books, leaving word that he should not be disturbed. He had just selected his theme and was well into the preparation of a sermon when there was a knock at his study door and a most urgent request that he visit a sick man who could not possibly live through the night. The minister hesitated for a

single moment. By hard work and painstaking preparation he had established a pulpit reputation and the thought of a possible failure on Sunday morning disturbed his mind. "I must have a sermon," he reasoned. "Hundreds will be waiting for a sermon. Better disappoint one man than hundreds." The minister hesitated no longer, turned away from his inviting books, left the unfinished manuscript, and went out in the night to the side of the dying man. And there at his bedside occurred a most moving incident which became the inspiration of the sermon of the next Sunday morning; a sermon, too, that carried that minister's name throughout the English-speaking world. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

When Lord Beresford, long an admiral in the British navy and a most popular officer, was one time in the North Sea with his fleet, a sailor fell overboard from the flagship. Lord Beresford caught up a rope, gave one end of it to a sailor, and with the other end leaped overboard amid the ice floes and saved the drowning man. At the time the incident was commented upon in some quarters as foolhardy and unnecessary. Time passed on; Lord Beresford had ambitions to occupy a seat in Parliament. He stood for office and the opposition against him was considerable. One night he was speaking in Manchester to a vast audience which was against him five to one. While

he was speaking there was a commotion in the rear of the room caused by a man attempting to push his way to the front. The police stopped the man and were about to eject him from the building when Lord Beresford, in a spirit of utmost good humour, said: "If the man wants to speak let him come up here and say what he has to say from this platform." The man came to the platform, and turning to the audience he explained: "I came here because Admiral Beresford risked his life to save mine in the North Sea. I owe my life to him. I am not an orator, but I want to say that here is a man whom the voters of this district can trust as a brother." The speech was received with shouts of approval and it saved the day for Admiral Beresford. He carried the district by a vote unprecedentedly large in the politics of England. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

Lyman Beecher went once to preach to a country congregation on a stormy Sunday. Just one person was present at the service and Lyman Beecher had brought one of his strongest sermons,—one that multitudes had listened to with delight and profit. What would the average minister do under the same circumstances? I know of a parallel case in the South. A minister was announced to preach at a country church upon a certain Sunday evening. A heavy rainstorm swept the community just about church time. The minister and his host

were the only ones present. They laughed and joked about the situation and the minister's host said to him: "Well, shall you preach or shall I preach?" The minister did not preach his sermon and later he went back home with his host, who, by the way, was not a Christian. Lyman Beecher preached his sermon to his one auditor and he preached it, so we are told, as carefully and earnestly as though hundreds were present. And surely it was worth while, for the young man became a convert to Christianity, went into the ministry, and wielded a great power for good. And the turning point in his career was the sermon Lyman Beecher preached to him on that stormy Sunday. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

Some years ago a minister was called upon to offer a prayer at a burial in a little country cemetery. The day was wet and cold and he was a total stranger to the people who had asked for his services. It was a dreary, unfeeling burial. The doors of two of the carriages were opened during the prayer, but none of the occupants got out in the driving rain. Nobody spoke to the minister, nobody thanked him for losing a day from his books and his parish duties; nobody showed any grief for the dead, nor any courtesy to the living. Six years passed and the minister had quite forgotten the incident when a letter came to him from a college student whose name the min-

ister had never heard. As a boy of sixteen, the young man said, he had attended the funeral of a great-aunt. He told how greatly the dark leadened sky, the driving of the rain on the carriage windows and the jolting of the slowly moving vehicle had depressed him. Moreover, under their heavy mourning veils the relatives had discussed the probable disposition of their aunt's property and the sordidness of it all had affected the boy's sensitive nature. "Ours had never been a religious family," the letter went on, "and this was my first contact with the serious side of life. I don't think I heard a dozen words of the prayer, but for days I could see you just as you stood there, bare-headed in the pouring rain. I supposed at first that you were paid for the service and when I learned from a light remark on the way back that you weren't, I wondered why you came. I couldn't understand why a man should do what brought him neither pleasure nor profit—why he should do it for total strangers. By degrees I came to see that the kind of life I was most familiar with went to pieces when misfortune or death came. Father was always nervous and restless for days after any of the men in his business circle died; and then I'd think of you, standing so calm and quiet out there in the rain praying, not because you were paid for doing it, but because you believed in prayer. That seemed to point to something higher, and I began reading

the New Testament to find the next step. Father was angry when I joined the church and decided for the ministry. He had other plans for me, but I couldn't see my duty anywhere except in the church; so here I am working my way through college. I have written this to tell you where the good impulse started—a place where you might think there was the least chance of exerting any influence at all." Verily, it is true—"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

A well-known citizen of Louisville, Kentucky, was on his way one morning to attend Sunday School in a downtown church. As he neared the church he met a little newsboy who was sobbing as though his heart would break. The man stopped the boy and asked him what was the trouble. The little fellow explained between sobs that another newsboy had taken his pennies, twenty-six in number. The man gave the boy a quarter and as the money went into the little fellow's pocket the tears ceased to flow. "Say, mister," he said, "ain't you the man that stays in the wallpaper store on Third Street?" The gentleman said that he was. "Well, sir," the lad continued, "I would like to bring you a paper every day until I pay you back this money." "All right," agreed the man who was the head of a leading wallpaper concern in the city. Then he added, "Do you go to Sunday School anywhere?"

Upon the little fellow answering in the negative, the business man obtained a promise from him to be at that corner at five minutes before nine on the next Sunday morning and he would take him to his Sunday School. The next Sunday morning at the appointed hour the lad was there. He was taken to Sunday School, enrolled in a class, and the teacher asked to take an especial interest in him. The papers were faithfully delivered until the debt was paid. Then the boy asked the man to become a regular customer. The business man was so impressed by the bright little chap who wanted to do the right thing that he secured him a position in one of the mercantile houses of Louisville. Time passed on and the boy continued to do well; then, after a few years, he disappeared and his benefactor quite forgot the incident. Several years later a well-dressed, manly, and unusually prepossessing young man presented himself in this same man's office. "You don't know me," he said. The merchant looked the stranger over and acknowledged that he did not remember him. Then the young man spoke: "Well, sir, I am the little newsboy whom you helped and started to Sunday School nine years ago. I live in St. Louis now; I am receiving a salary of three thousand dollars a year; I am happily married; and, sir, I want you to know that I still go to Sunday School."

A church at Madisonville, Ohio, a dozen years

ago was discouraged and pastorless, meeting in a very small, rickety frame building which had been erected as a sort of make-shift tabernacle. The site was not a good one. For some months the Cincinnati ministers preached there on Sunday afternoons without any financial compensation. It was either that or let the church go down. About this time one of the bright young girls of the community—then in high school—made up her mind to become a Christian. Her mother and grandmother were members of the little mission church; her decision was reached by the help of the preaching that she heard there, and by the religious training she had received from her mother and her grandmother in their home. But she had an unusually great question before her as to the matter of church membership. She was a very attractive young woman, an accomplished musician, a charming reader and entertainer, much sought socially. Her companions, classmates, and social friends, were all members or attendants at the big popular church. There was no society in the little mission for her. She was given definitely to understand that she would lose caste in society unless she went into the same church with all her young friends; that if she went into the little mission there was nothing there for her and that socially she would stand alone. This was not meant as, nor received as, persecution, but as a simple statement of conditions. It

required real moral heroism for the young woman to cast her lot with that little mission church and give up a really enviable position in the society of a large and popular congregation. But that is exactly what she did. She confessed her faith and cast her lot with the little struggling mission. Her decision marked an epoch and was, indeed, the turning point in the history of the mission. The young woman went to work in church and Sunday School, laying her talents on the altar of God's service. She drilled the children and called for help. She called for more children and she called for more help. She was regular and faithful in attendance at all services, prompt in the performance of all tasks. Gradually there grew up about her from unseen and unexpected sources a delightful society, the church took on new life, it grew by leaps and bounds. The little old frame building is now a print-shop, the congregation meets in a substantial, modern, commodious, beautiful brick building on a splendid site just across from two schools—the grade school and the high school. Some two thousand school children see this church building daily and it is worth looking at, for it is a monument to the moral courage of a high school girl. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days."

The other day I conversed with a great old man who had been a school teacher for upwards of forty years. He was in a reminiscent mood and

he told me of the discouragements he had encountered in the course of his career as a teacher. He sketched, in particular, the character of two pupils who were bright but incorrigible and gave him no end of trouble. "I bore with those two boys," he explained, "with all the patience I possessed. I ignored their slights, overlooked their indifference, affected not to notice their insolence, and all the time I strove to make men of them. I thought I had failed; so far as I could see my interest in their behalf was all in vain. But within the past year I have had a visit from those two boys, now middle-aged men. They reside in the Middle West, one a circuit judge, the other a successful ranchman noted for his benefactions; and, sir, those two men travelled fifteen hundred miles to tell me that they owed their success largely to my kindness and patience as their teacher thirty years ago. They urged me to take a trip West at their expense which was fine, but my reward for what was apparently unappreciated service was greater than any three thousand mile trip as I heard from their willing lips the fruitage of my work as a teacher three decades ago." And as the old gentleman told me this his face shone like the face of an angel and his eyes were moist with tears. He had cast his bread upon the waters, and lo, he had found it after many years.

Such incidents could be multiplied indefinitely, but these will suffice. Bread cast upon the water

is not lost, "thou shalt find it after many days." How many? The Heavenly Father knows. Perhaps a year; maybe ten or twenty years; perchance fifty; possibly not in a life-time, and still the promise holds good. The great law remains in force, the good God is in His Heaven.

There is a sturdy philosophy in this text which fattens faith and strengthens hope. Nothing good is lost, no labour of love is in vain, no perfume was ever wasted on the desert air, no flower was ever born to blush unseen. "Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days." Thou *shalt* find it either in time or in eternity, but find it ultimately thou surely *shalt*.

"Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered,
Her feet are firmly planted on the rock;
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,
Nor quails before the earthquake's shock.
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,
And cries, It shall be done—sometime, somewhere."

O CHRIST, THOU ART THE BREAD OF LIFE CAST SO WONDROUSLY UPON THE WATERS OF A SINFUL HUMANITY AND THOU CANST FIND NO FRUIT IN US UNLESS WE WILL THAT IT SHALL BE SO. FILL US WITH THY SPIRIT UNTIL WE SHALL KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.

VIII

DOUBTS AND DOUBTERS

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out;
There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds.

"He fought his doubts and gathered strength;
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them; thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own."

ALFRED TENNYSON.

VIII

DOUBTS AND DOUBTERS

"I believe, help thou mine unbelief."—*Mark* 9:24.

DANIEL WEBSTER requested that this verse of Scripture be carved on his gravestone as accurately epitomizing his biography in the life of the Spirit. Significant choice of epitaph, for who of the vast multitude of Believers has not at some time or another breathed the prayer: "I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

In this study it is assumed that we are all doubters in some sense of the term. Wherever there is a normal mind questions are bound to rise. It is probably true that all of us doubt some of the time and that some of us doubt all of the time, but it is not true that all of us doubt all of the time. Robert Browning said: "We live a life of doubt diversified by faith; or a life of faith diversified by doubt." This is a distinction with difference, and the difference between such lives is such a difference between a life of sickness diversified by health, and a life of health diversified by sickness. In the one instance the trend of life is doubt, faith an incident; in the other the trend of life is faith, doubt an incident. Let it be thoroughly understood at the outset that

when it is conceded that we all doubt and at one time or another are all doubters, it is by no means true that we are doubters in the same degree or that the attitude of our lives toward doubt is one and the same.

It will not be necessary to prove that doubt is an experience common to us all, but it may be profitable to illustrate this fact. Such illustrations abound. Biography teems with them. Look at the characters of the Bible. Religion is the great theme of the Bible, and faith is at the forefront of the pages of Holy Writ. Great heroes of the faith are there, and yet what hero of that faith whose life career is traced upon the Bible page was without his experience of doubt?

Abraham's faith failed at least once. Moses was beset behind and before with doubts. David's doubts dampen his Psalms with tears. Elijah doubted the existence of one other beside himself who was faithful to Jehovah. Peter's faith weakened woefully, and as for Paul—he fought the demon doubt daily.

Take the case of John the Baptist—one of the great characters of all times, forerunner of Jesus Christ, the Voice in the Wilderness that came crying: "Make ye ready the way of the Lord." John the Baptist bore witness to One that should come after him, the latchet of whose shoes he counted himself as not worthy to unloose; and when Jesus came John recognized Him as the long-

promised Messiah and testified: "I have seen and borne witness that this is the Son of God." Time passed on and the sturdy prophet from the wilderness, because of his courage in speaking the truth before a licentious king, was cast into prison. The great rugged soul, used to the open sky and God's out-of-doors, pined and fretted in the narrow prison cell. Doubts began to rise in his mind, doubts about Jesus. Was He after all the Christ? And John sent his disciples to Jesus with the pathetic query: "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" John the Baptist, who bore witness to Christ, who had testified that He was the Son of God, in a period of gloom and despondency began to question what he had once affirmed with deepest conviction. And is it not in this one experience that John the Baptist comes closest to us, O fellow-doubters of life's varied pilgrimage?

Did Jesus ever doubt? Did He, too, who was tempted in all points like as we are, know what it was to doubt both man and God? There are at least two passages of Scripture that seem to answer this question in the affirmative. In Luke 18:8, these words are attributed to Jesus: "When the Son of man cometh shall he find faith on the earth?" This is one of the most pathetic inquiries that Jesus ever made, and on the surface it seems to indicate a doubt as to whether mankind would accept the faith as He had taught it and lived it.

In Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 is recorded the tense and awful sentence: "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Here is an expression of the deep and dreadful thought on the part of Jesus that God had forgotten Him, had cast Him off, that amidst the thick and awful darkness He was forsaken by both God and man. Whatever may be the true interpretation of these Scriptural passages, they record experiences which, though brief, were real to Jesus, and because of them they make Him more than He could be without them—our great Mediator, our great High Priest, who can be touched with the feelings of all our infirmities.

Not only is it true that doubts are common to us all, but it is also true that there are particular periods of life and certain experiences when doubts assail us with incredible vigour and our minds become veritable interrogation points.

There is, for example, the sceptical period of youth, the period when the youthful mind begins to question everything that he was taught as a child to believe. Children accept at first the beliefs of their parents without question, and are satisfied, but along in the late teens period comes the disposition to question and even to assume that the world is all out of joint and youth was born to set it right. Some one has traced humorously

the development of the human mind in the college career: "The first year in college the student knows that he knows it all; the second year he only thinks that he knows it all; the third year he knows that he doesn't know it all; and the fourth year he begins to doubt that he knows anything." This is a critical period and one that calls for patience, for tact and sympathy on the part of parents and teachers and pastors.

The period of middle life is another time perilous for faith. Someone has coined the expression: "The atheism of middle age," and the phrase tragically describes the period of distress and those obstinate questionings which come after the heyday of youth and young manhood is gone, and one stands midway between the unfilled hopes of the past and the nameless dread of approaching old age. Faith bears a heavy strain in middle life, and midchannel is where many vessels go down in woeful wreck.

Then there is the doubt which rises from the experience of affliction, of adversity, of loss, of the advent of death in home and family circles. These experiences come sometimes like a bolt from the blue, smiting us to the very earth in awful shock or grief, and shaking our faith to its very foundations. Such experiences call plaintively for that love "which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." Strangely enough, these experiences have been the

crucibles from which have emerged the purest and strongest faith.

Then there are the experiences of great prosperity, which test faith so severely and furnish a most fertile soil for the subtlest and most forbidding sort of doubt. When people begin to trust in gold they begin to lose faith in God by leaps and bounds. Money will purchase so much that is enjoyable. Money will protect its possessors from so many things that are unpleasant. Money is so real, so tangible, that the temptation to trust in gold rather than in God is too strong for thousands. And, I believe, it is more difficult to deal with doubts that rise out of great prosperity than the doubts that come from any other of life's experiences. The very atmosphere that surrounds the sleek, prosperous, independent, self-sufficient doubter is not hospitable to faith. The wind that blows from the Doubting Castle where wealth and luxury abound resembles the cutting wind that blows from off some gigantic iceberg.

What shall we do with our doubts? Shall we ignore them? What shall we do with those gloomy doubts that rise between man and God, and between man and man, the doubts that threaten to destroy us? The best prescription that any Doctor of Doubts can give is this: Doubt your doubts. Don't believe your doubts. Face your doubts. Don't run away from them. Question your ques-

tions. Don't raise a question and be satisfied with having raised it.

George Herbert, in his most readable little volume, "The Country Parson," has this wholesome word concerning doubts: "If you ever have any doubts do not run away from them, but always face them. If you are going through a cemetery and you think you see a ghost go up to it and pull it to pieces. Possibly you will find that instead of it being a real ghost it is only a sheet that was hung out to dry and has been forgotten by the servant." What sublimated common sense! And how many of us do just the opposite! We think we see a ghost and instead of doubting and investigating Mr. Ghost we run away from him, spreading abroad the wonderful story of the ghost we saw, how he flitted among the trees and the tombs, how sepulchral his tones, how dreadful his groans —this is the way we are prone to treat our doubts. We are inclined to believe our doubts, we are tempted to feed our doubts. What we ought to do is to doubt our doubts, investigate our doubts, do battle royal with our doubts, and put them to rout. This is precisely what John the Baptist did. When he began to doubt Jesus he squarely faced his doubt; he straightway began to doubt his doubts; and he sent his followers to Jesus, Himself, with the pertinent question: "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?"

There is hope for every doubter who will doubt

his doubts, who will deal with them fairly and squarely, who will rigidly investigate the truth. Here, as in everything else, the pioneer plainsman's homely advice is good:—"Be sure you are right, then go ahead." If you say you do not believe the Bible be sure you mean what you say. It may be you do not believe what somebody has said about the Bible. If you say you do not believe the Bible is inspired be sure that you do not mean somebody's theory of Biblical inspiration. If you say you do not believe in Christ as Divine it may be you are disbelieving some definition of His Divinity. Cultivate the open mind. If you are reading books that challenge what you believe the Bible teaches is true, read carefully the Bible with a view to finding out for yourself what it does teach. Then decide what you will believe, but not before. If you are uncertain as to the value of Christianity put your doubt to the test. You might read history and be profited by the study of the effects of Christianity upon the world's civilization. But there is a simpler, and even more practical, test: Select the people whom you know, the people whose lives are tolerably well-known to you, and group them in two companies. On the one hand group those who are believers and are seeking the mind of Christ. On the other hand group those whom you know to be unbelievers and who estimate lightly religion. Study the lives of each group. Talk with the

members of each group. Obtain their views of life, their attitude toward God and man; and then, out of your intimate study decide with which group you would rather cast your lot. Any great truth must stand or fall by the test—"By their fruits ye shall know them."

Doubt your doubts. Bring acid and test their metals. Bring tape and take their measure. Bring plummet line and sound their depths. Face them squarely, probe them thoroughly. Drag them out of the shadows where they lurk, and watch them shrivel in the strong white light of investigation.

So much for the doubts. But what shall we do with the Doubter? Doubt the Doubter? No, the very opposite. Believe in the doubter. Doubt the doubter's doubt, but believe in the doubter, himself. The same distinction exists between the doubter and his doubt as does between the sinner and his sin. The distinction is not always easy to make, but it is there. It used to be quite the fashion to confuse the doubter with his doubt and to run over him rough shod. It is still the fashion in some quarters to doubt the doubter, to damn him for his doubt, to put him outside the pale of respectability along with the reprobate and the scoundrel. But that was not Jesus' way. The severity of Jesus was never visited upon the honest doubter, but instead upon those who prided themselves upon their religious attainments, yet were actually hypocritical and loveless. Look at the

attitude of Jesus toward John when John doubted Him and sent the message: "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?" Did Jesus condemn John? Did He take advantage of so favourable an opportunity to weaken John's influence or assail his character? He did nothing of the kind. On the contrary He commended him. He said: "Among them that are born of women, there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." Jesus believed in John, and Jesus' method of destroying John's doubts and increasing John's faith is worthy our emulation. To the Baptist's disciples He said: "Go and tell John the things which ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me."

The attitude of some well-meaning persons toward honest doubters is as certain to drive them farther away from faith as though deliberately designed to accomplish that very purpose. When a young man questions some Scriptural truth, or some view of the Bible, only to discover that in raising the question he has drawn suspicion to himself and called forth censure, naturally enough his doubt is deepened, not dispelled. He asks for bread and is given a stone; he seeks for light and experiences a thunderstorm.

Jesus' attitude toward John the Doubter should be the attitude of preacher and parent and teacher toward the doubter in home and church and school. Jesus' attitude toward John the Baptist in that good man's experience of doubt is altogether beautiful, patient, sympathetic. Such an attitude invariably makes for faith. Imagine, if you can, Jesus calling John an infidel; fancy, if you can, Jesus calling Thomas a sceptic. How unchristian our custom of flaunting the names infidel, sceptic, atheist, agnostic before the faces of those who are seeking truth and light, who need our help not our hostility, who need to be builded up, not destroyed!

I am not forgetting that there is a blatant, even blasphemous, type of doubter. I am not speaking of that type now. But, even so, the blatant and blasphemous doubter is not helped toward faith by calling him names. At its best calling names is unprofitable, and at its worst contemptible. And if we begin by having some faith in a doubter, even a doubter of the coarse and noisy kind, might not our faith in him begin to beget faith on his part in our God and His Christ?

Here, then, is the prescription for our doubts and for doubters: Doubt your doubts. Subject them to the closest scrutiny and the most merciless investigation.

Believe in the doubter. Fan the smallest spark of faith into flame. Help him to doubt his own

doubts by making him to know your faith in him.

I opened the other day the immortal allegory of Bunyan and reread after some years the experience of Christian and Hopeful when they wandered off through By-Path Meadow and were made prisoners in Doubting Castle. And, as I read I felt again somewhat of the thrill I experienced when I read the Pilgrim's Progress as a little boy. Giant Despair, you will remember, was master of that castle, and his wife who was named Diffidence was mistress there. It is not said that they had any children but if they had a son and daughter they might well have been named Sarcasm and Ridicule. Bunyan's nomenclature is richly suggestive. Look at the names of the master and mistress of Doubting Castle,—Despair and Diffidence. Are they not the finished products of Doubt? The poor pilgrims suffered in Doubting Castle. Giant Despair beat Christian and Hopeful with many stripes, and they were without food or drink. They were in a sorry plight and knew not what awful disaster awaited them on the morrow. In the midst of their anxieties Christian remembered that he possessed a key called Promise. He informed Hopeful, who suggested that he pluck the key from his bosom and try the lock of the dungeon door. Christian did so, and lo, the bolts gave back and the door flew open. Christian and Hopeful passed out into the castle yard and lo, the same key opened the gate.

Into glorious freedom they made their joyful way and so came to the Delectable Mountains and there they met the shepherds who bade them welcome to the gardens and orchards, the vineyards and fountains of water. And the names of the shepherds were—mark well these names—Knowledge, Experience, Watchful, and Sincere. Then the four shepherds pointed out from one of the mountain heights Doubting Castle and traced for the two pilgrims a path that led from that terrible place to an enclosure where Giant Despair was accustomed to lead his prisoners and leave them after he had put out their eyes. There they saw, wandering in their blindness among the tombs in darkness and distress, a number of the giant's victims. And when Christian and Hopeful looked upon that sight tears gushed from their eyes, although they said nothing to the shepherds of their narrow escape from that dreadful castle of doubt and danger.

Ah, me! We have all known the interior of Doubting Castle; Giant Despair and his wife, Diffidence, are not entire strangers to us. But no one need dwell in Doubting Castle. There is a key that unlocks its dungeon doors. It is the key of Faith. Subjects of Giant Despair, take that blessed key, unlock the dungeon door, leave Doubting Castle, and come into the Delectable Mountains of Trust where the Good Shepherd will lead you beside the green pastures and make

you to lie down by still waters, will restore your soul, and, by-and-bye, lead you home to go out no more forever.

LORD JESUS, WE BELIEVE, HELP THOU OUR UNBELIEF. LIKE THE TWO DISCIPLES ON THE EMMAUS WAY WE ARE FOOLISH AND SLOW TO BELIEVE ALL THAT THE PROPHETS HAVE SPOKEN. PITY OUR WILLINGNESS TO DWELL IN VALES OF GLOOM WHEN WE MIGHT ABIDE ON THE SHINING PLATEAUS. ENRICH OUR AFFECTIONS TOWARD ONE ANOTHER AND MAKE US FIT TO BE THY MESSENGERS OF LIGHT TO ALL WHO SIT IN DARKNESS.

IX

THE GIFT OF THE MORNING STAR

"If you can wait and not be tired by waiting
Or being lied about don't deal in lies,
Or being hated don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise.

"If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds' worth of distance run,
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!"

RUDYARD KIPLING.

IX

THE GIFT OF THE MORNING STAR

"And he that overcometh . . . I will give him the morning star."—*Revelation* 2 : 26-28.

THIS closing volume of the Holy Scriptures is a veritable field of the cloth of gold. That the devout characters who glorify the pages of "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush" should reserve the word "magnificent" for the Book of Revelation is not surprising. Quite apart from its theological significance, the book is a wonder. Considered as a colossal canvas for the brush of the Almighty, it is bewildering in gorgeous colouring. Regarded as a vast augmented orchestra it is a succession of Halleluiah choruses with melodious interludes. As poetry it is epic, lyric, ode and hymn in unforgettable combination. Texts selected from this Book differ one from another in glory and the one selected for study here is among the most glorious of them all. Christ is the author, the promise is of Him; to those who overcome He declares: "I will give him the morning star."

OBSERVE CAREFULLY THE BEAUTY AND BRILLIANCE OF THE METAPHOR—"THE MORNING STAR." The very expression is synonymous with

glory and scintillating radiance. Just before daybreak the morning star may be seen in all of its jubilant splendour. Reference is made by other Biblical writers to the glorious star of the morning. Job, in the thirty-eighth chapter and seventh verse, tells of the time "when the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Isaiah, in the fourteenth chapter and twelfth verse, alludes to the downfall of Babylon under the imagery of the morning star fallen from heaven, and exclaims: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O daystar, sun of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground that didst lay low thy nations!" In II Peter, first chapter and nineteenth verse, are these words: "And we have the word of prophecy made more sure; where unto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the daystar arise in your hearts." This allusion to the daystar is a poetic one. After a night of fishing on the sea of Galilee, Simon Peter had many times beheld the glory of the daystar, and watched it quivering in the mists of the early morning, only disappearing when the sun arose in fiery grandeur. Remembering in his old age the splendid spectacle, the Apostle employs the figure of the morning star to express the glory of the crowning revelation that God gave us in His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

On rare occasions I have beheld the indescrib-

able glory of the morning star, but never in such surpassing beauty as from the upper deck of a steamship in the Atlantic Ocean a little while before daybreak on an August morning. The night before the Captain had informed the passengers that the ship would pass the Azores about four o'clock the next morning, close enough to see the signal lights from the harbour of one of the coast cities. In company with a half-dozen other passengers I came on deck about 3:30 o'clock and there in the heavens, like some great electrical aerial signal light, hung the most brilliant star I ever saw. It seemed so close that I thought if one had a ladder of but little more than ordinary length he could set it up against the vault of heaven and so easily reach the great and glorious star that scintillated with sheen and pulsated in its loveliness like a thing of life. "The morning star!" What a wonderful figure is this, and the splendid promise is of the Christ. "He that overcometh," He says, "to him will I give the morning star." Whatever the precise meaning of this fine figure it assuredly signifies something altogether glorious, something greatly to be desired, something far above the price of rubies, something better than gold, yea than much fine gold.

We shall do the text no violence if we accept this beautiful metaphor as a symbol of the highest and holiest aspiration. The

stars have long been associated with human achievement. Astrology is older than astronomy. Conversation, if not belief, still persists with reference to unlucky stars. In 1797, when Napoleon returned to Paris after his campaigns in Italy, he was astonished to see the crowds around the Palace of the Luxembourg, fixing their eyes on the sky. He looked up and saw Venus gleaming there in the full daylight. The people enthusiastically applauded the apparition as his star. Emerson's advice was: "Hitch your wagon to a star," and he has phrased his thought well. Christianity rightfully interpreted is first, last, and always a forward-looking faith. Our great Leader does not ask us to fling away ambition; instead, He requires us to make the noblest use of ambition. Follow the Christ if you would know the glory of going on. When Rubinstein was in America some years ago his host asked him on Sunday if he wanted to go to church. He answered: "Yes, if you can take me to hear a preacher who can tempt me to do the impossible." Every preacher of the Christian faith ought to be able to do that very thing. He whom we preach embodies the highest and holiest ideals. Jesus' face was set toward Jerusalem and Jerusalem was the place of His crucifixion. "I must also see Rome," exclaimed the Apostle Paul, although to see Rome meant martyrdom. "I press on," is a great Christian motto. So we may think of the morning star

as a symbol of perseverance in every worthy undertaking. Whatever be one's life task, whether in store or shop, in school or on farm, the Christian faith supplies the mightiest incentive to invest one's work with the very best and finest that one can give.

The great painter, Rubens, believed more in hard work and practice than he did in genius. "Do well," he once said, "and some will be jealous. Do better and they will be confounded." In his opinion a man who imagines that he can do something marvellous without toil and patience "must have a large dose of madness in him." To an artist who boasted that he had painted a certain picture in less than three weeks, Rubens said coldly: "I am surprised, my friend, I should have thought you had only daubed at it for three days." Edison instructs his men never to send anything out of his laboratory that is not, so far as human eyes can tell, absolutely flawless. Biography is luminous with the story of pluck's fruitage and reward. Giotto could draw a perfect circle. How many imperfect circles he drew before his art mastered perfection we know not—likely many thousands. One reason why so many are stranded on the shores of failure is because they did not invest themselves in the fullest sense, they followed the line of least resistance, they failed to do with their might what their hands found to do. There is a little gem of verse entitled: "Standing on

Tip-Toe," by George Frederick Cameron, which interprets accurately the forward-looking unbeatable soul:

"Standing on tip-toe ever since my youth,
Striving to grasp the future just above,
I hold at length the lonely future—Truth,
And Truth is Love.

"I feel as one who being a while confined,
Sees drop to dust about him all his bars;
The clay grows less and leaving it, the mind
Dwells with the stars."

"I will give him the morning star!" Such is the symbol of the Christian life, the morning star ever waxing, never waning. Let this splendid promise be for every one a mighty commission to "covet earnestly the best gifts." Let this great declaration teach us that it is better to be defeated in the battle for the best than victorious in a contest for the mediocre. The standard Christ set up for His followers is perfection: "Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

THIS SPLENDID FIGURE MAY BE TAKEN ALSO AS A SYMBOL OF SELF-MASTERY—THE REWARD OF OVERCOMING. To be a Christian is to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the beginning of conquest is self. In the opening chapters of Revelation containing the letters to the churches of Asia, there are seven distinct promises of which this text is but one, and the promises are all conditioned upon overcoming. Finally in the twenty-

first chapter, seventh verse, the writer concludes his memorable description of the New Jerusalem with the impressive words: "He that overcometh shall inherit these things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." We who seek to follow Him who overcame the world must perforce set ourselves to overcome whatever may be contrary to His mind.

There is the matter of an unruly tongue. A host of church members have need to tame the tongue. There is only one place where one can tame a tongue that has a foul way of spreading poison, and that is to tame it in the school of Him who "when He was reviled, reviled not again."

And there is the obstacle of a violent temper. A great many of us need to take our tempers to Christ's school to learn control. In a recent life of Thomas B. Reed there is a homely, yet illuminating, incident told of that famous statesman. Mr. Reed, who was a very large and heavy man, went into the sitting-room of his home one evening and came very nearly sitting down on a chair where curled up comfortably was his little daughter's favourite cat. In her haste to save the cat the little girl pulled the chair out from under her father, who sat down heavily upon the floor. Mr. Reed got up slowly and with fine control remonstrated gently with the little girl, saying: "My daughter, it is easier to get a new cat than it is a new father."

Then there are those untoward passions that will, if permitted to persist, consume our better natures like some corrosive venom. Jealousy, envy, and avarice—those enemies of the best must be stubbornly resisted and conquered, else they will conquer and destroy.

There, too, are the vicious habits. They can never be conquered save by will power and a most persistent endeavour to overcome them. The mania for gambling, the love of strong drink, indulgence in any vice,—only by the hardest kind of battle can these enemies of the spiritual life be defeated and put to rout. There is a joy in overcoming, an actual elation in putting to flight the aliens that seek the citadel of the spiritual. It is a rich and wonderful experience to coöperate with Christ in cleansing the temple of the Holy Spirit of enemies that seek to defile it. John Masefield in "The Everlasting Mercy," draws a terrible picture of the interior of a public drinking house at the closing time. A good Quakeress has just stepped in on her round of tract distributing, when she is assailed with ribald utterances by a burly drunkard. She calmly listens until he has finished, then she turns to him with these words:

"Saul Kane," she said, "when next you drink,
Do me the gentleness to think
That every drop of drink accursed
Makes Christ within you die of thirst;
That every dirty word you say
Is one more flint upon His way,

Another thorn about His head,
Another mock by where He tread,
Another nail, another cross,
All that you are is that Christ's lost."

Would you possess the "morning star"? Then "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh."

IN A VERY PROPER SENSE WE MAY THINK OF THE GIFT OF THE MORNING STAR AS NONE OTHER THAN JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF. Throughout the Scriptures a star is the symbol of royal dominion and the highest use of this symbol is its application to Jesus Christ. As has already been intimated in this study, Peter in his second epistle, in his use of the daystar, refers to Jesus. In Revelation 22:16, are the words, "I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star." That every man and woman may possess Him is an outstanding and glorious fact of Christian biography. The pupils of any master come at last to partake of their master's mind, and in a sense the master is reproduced in his followers. In a still more intimate sense this is true of the faithful disciples of Jesus. Paul, the mystic, loved to write and speak of the Christ as the priceless possession of the believer. In Galatians 2:20 he testifies: "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in

me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me." In Ephesians 3:17 he observes: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." And in Colossians 1:27 he employs the fine phrase: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." While in John 17:23, Jesus prays that all who believe may be one—"I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one; that the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovedst them, even as thou lovedst me."

Recently I examined a curious picture taken by an amateur photographer of the snow-clad weeping-willows in Linden Grove Cemetery at Covington, Kentucky. Oddly, too, the photograph was taken on a Christmas Eve. When the plate was developed and the picture printed lo! in one of the snow-shrouded trees appeared the outlines strikingly distinct of the conventional portraits of Jesus Christ, every detail of His form, the crown of thorns, the serious upturned face. It is so vivid, so unexpected that there is something almost unearthly about that photograph. Copies of the picture have been sold far and wide and the owner of the negative is said to have refused forty thousand dollars for the plate. For years to come that chance photograph of a winter landscape with the Christ's figure fashioned so surprisingly in the snowy tree will call forth comment anew. As I

recall this strange photograph and the circumstances of its making, I behold in it a parable of spiritual life for all of us who seek the mind of Christ. If we shall follow Him closely and persistently seek His mind we shall at last—O marvellous achievement! possess Him, He shall be in us and of us, and so become our all in all. And if a spiritual photograph could be made of such a lover of the Lord, might it not be that the picture when finished would reveal radiant, glorious, transcendent, the likeness of Him who is the express image of the Father of us all?

"And he that overcometh . . . I will give him the morning star."

"'Tis heaven alone that is given away,
'Tis only God may be had for the asking."

GIVER OF THE MORNING STAR, THOU ART HE FOR WHOM OUR SOULS HAVE WAITED. THOU ALONE CANST SATISFY OUR SPIRITUAL HUNGER. CREATE WITHIN US A CLEAN HEART, O GOD, AND RENEW A RIGHT SPIRIT WITHIN US SO THAT SWEPT AND GARNISHED OUR LIVES MAY BECOME FIT ABODES FOR THE GREAT COMPANION.

X

RIZPAH OF THE MOTHER HEART

"Mary, when that little child
Lay upon your heart at rest,
Did the thorns, Maid-mother, mild,
Pierce your breast?

"Mary, when that little child
Softly kissed your cheek benign,
Did you know, O Mary mild,
Judas' sign?

"Mary, when that little child
Cooed and prattled at your knee,
Did you see with heart-beat wild,
Calvary?"

Rose Trumbull.

X

RIZPAH OF THE MOTHER HEART

> "And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water was poured upon them from heaven; and she suffered neither the birds of the heavens to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."—*II Samuel* 21: 10.

AS stars shine most in deepest tints of blue, so this dramatic and tender incident shines from out a dark and bloody background. The time was in the early part of David's reign. Saul and Jonathan were dead and a bloody war of vengeance had been waged upon the entire house of the slain monarch. The Gibeonites, because of havoc wrought upon them by Saul, demanded of King David seven of Saul's grandsons that they might be put to death in retaliation. Israel's king delivered up seven of Saul's descendants, sparing only Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth. Two of Rizpah's sons and five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul, were chosen. These seven the Gibeonites put to death in the days of barley harvest. Such stories of bloodshed make unpleasant reading and David's act in complying with the request seems base and heartless. Yet, it was in accordance with the law of those times that a

murdered man's nearest kin must requite the wrong done his people. We judge these events by the time in which they took place. It happened a thousand years before Christ and was only a commonplace of those sanguinary times. In the very heart of this dark and bloody deed there shines steadily a most touching and beautiful ministry.

Rizpah, the wife of Saul, when her two sons were hanged on the hillside, fetched sackcloth and spread it upon the rock underneath their lifeless forms. And from the beginning of the barley harvest until the end, Rizpah of the Mother Heart defended the bodies of her two boys from the birds of the heaven by day and the beasts of the field by night. Brave woman of a brutal age! It was not permitted her to cut down the bodies of her sons and give them decent burial, but she did all that she could. A body left outside and unprotected in that semi-tropic clime is soon the prey of carrion birds or scavenger beasts, and such a disposition of the dead was particularly horrifying to the Israelitish people.

I have somewhere seen a celebrated picture with this Biblical incident as theme. It portrays Rizpah on the rock defending her dead from the ominous-looking birds that sought to attack their bodies; and defending them, also, from the skulking beasts that sought to drag the bodies down. It is a dramatic picture: Rizpah's long hair is disheveled and her attitude tense and militant to the core.

And this touching incident of that far away period has lessons for us of today. The incident of Rizpah defending her dead sons is typical of the mothers of earth defending their living progeny. Think of the brave mothers who are protecting with sturdy heroism their helpless young from the insatiable vultures of poverty. There is no poetry in poverty, no halo about penury, no rainbow over want. "Poverty," said the Latin poet, "is death in another form." Where one strong, vigorous character has overcome poverty and pressed on to a competence and to abundant life, nine less fitted for the battle with such untoward conditions have gone down to defeat. Much that is untrue has been written in praise of poverty. It has been said that poverty brings out the best that is in men. Alas, only too often it brings it out by the roots. Oftener poverty brings out the worst that is in men. Poverty is a foe of civilization, a breeder of crime, a begetter of disease. Poverty is the great destroyer and many a mother, by the death of her husband or other misfortune, has been left to battle against the loathsome vultures that hover darkly over every home where want and penury flourish.

I know a mother left with five children to battle against this relentless foe. For ten years she has beaten back the vultures. She has brought up her boys and girls to be economical and to know the value of money. She has encouraged them to put

their hands to every honest task. Considering the disadvantages under which she has laboured, she has wrought well. But alas! her once strong, vigorous body is broken and pain-racked. She is prematurely aged, a victim of an unequal battle. Furthermore, the stern necessity of making a living has compelled her to take the children one by one out of the public schools before they had completed the lower grades. Speed the day when the state or municipality, or both, shall rally to the support of such a mother and make it possible for every aspiring son and daughter to acquire at least a high school education.

Behold, also, the mothers of today guarding their children from the unclean birds of impurity, the carrion crows of vicious influences and temptations. These foul birds come from all directions; they come singly and in flocks; they come in the guise of literature; they are on the streets and in the school; and they abound in places of amusement. They are especially numerous on the stage. The pernicious play has ever been a favourite breeding place for them, and now the moving pictures have become their rendezvous. If we have been slow to believe the motion pictures are fraught with peril we have but to investigate and learn our mistake. Not long ago the Cleveland censor of motion pictures secured one thousand five hundred and ninety-five essays written by children of six different schools giving their

opinions of the kind of pictures they liked best. The answers contain plentiful food for sober reflection.

A boy in the third grade wrote: "I go to the show about once a month. I would like to go once a week. When you go to the show you see men robbing houses and you learn to rob houses and people."

A girl in the fifth grade wrote down this revealing sentence: "The pictures I like best are the love pictures when a girl has to run away without her mother or father knowing about it."

There is not a home in America where children are that is not an object of attack by the foul birds of impurity.

The evil beasts of intemperance likewise threaten the home. The saloon and all the vile influences of the drink traffic strike at the very heart of the family. No boy or girl is safe from their attacks. These beasts are vicious and they are wary. They are beasts of prey; they stalk their game. They spring upon their prey from unsuspected ambushes. As the birds by day and the beasts by night threatened the dead bodies of Rizpah's sons, so the living sons and daughters of the mothers of today are imperilled by the vultures of poverty, menaced by the carrion crows of impurity, endangered by the voracious beasts of intemperance.

Like Rizpah, the militant motherhood of our

own day is compelled to use weapons in defense of sons and daughters. Rizpah used with good effect a sword or perhaps a staff. One of the weapons that militant motherhood may wield in defense of her home is the keen, strong, ever dependable, weapon of prayer. Most potent for good are a mother's prayers; how they shield, protect, and save! Hannah, the mother of Samuel, exercised this weapon and right well did she protect her little boy. There is a close connection between Samuel, the great and pure character, and Hannah, the devout mother praying for his welfare. John Randolph of Roanoke, that grand, gloomy, and peculiar Virginian, has left this eloquent testimony: "I would have been an infidel if it had not been for the remembrance of that time when my mother bade me kneel by her side and repeat the prayer: 'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.'" A prayerless mother is a weaponless mother, and it is as if she threw away every defense of her home and surrendered her hapless brood to the enemies of the good and pure. Dr. Theodore Cuyler, for thirty years pastor of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, and one of the most distinguished preachers of America, thus writes: "During my infancy my godly mother dedicated me to the Lord as truly as Hannah ever dedicated her son. When my paternal grandfather, who was a lawyer, offered to bequeath his law library to me my mother declined

the tempting offer and said to him: 'I expect that my little boy will yet be a minister.'"

When young Matthew Simpson, one of Methodism's greatest bishops, tremblingly broke the news to his widowed mother that he felt called to preach, she exclaimed with tears of joy: "Oh, my son, I have prayed for this hour every day since you were born. At that time we dedicated you to the Christian ministry." Most of our great and useful men were not self-made so much as they were mother-made, and by mothers who believed in and practised fellowship with God in prayer. Praying mothers watched over the lowly cribs of a Lincoln and a Garfield. I believe in the potency of prayer in general, and I believe with all my heart in the potency of a mother's prayer in particular. Many a mother carries today the burden of her breaking heart for a wayward son to God in unceasing prayer. And those prayers *shall* be answered. They are so fraught with love; they are so weighted with self-sacrifice; God will have to hear them.

"If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

"If I were drowned in the deepest sea,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose tears would come down to me,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

"If I were damned of body and soul,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose prayers would make me whole,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!"

A second weapon that militant motherhood may turn triumphantly against the foes of her children is that of sympathetic understanding of them; companionship with them in all their trials, their hopes, and joys. Mothers who have the confidence of their sons and daughters, and in turn are made the confidants of their children—such mothers are as Gibraltar against the enemies of the home. The press, and even the pulpit, have in recent years condemned the "conspiracy of silence" on the part of parents regarding instruction in the matter of sex. For the most part such agitation was wise and has borne fruit. Fathers and mothers are God's school-teachers in this delicate and vital matter, and no Christian home should be without this necessary instruction from the fittest, naturally, of mortals to impart it.

One of the most motherly "first ladies" in our land ever in the White House was Mrs. Lucy Webb-Hayes. She was not only a mother to her four sons, but their boon companion as well. Her sons saved their choicest jokes for her, they shared every joy and triumph with her, and in times of doubt and perplexity she was to them as the "shadow of a great rock in a weary land." There is a story that at an out-door reception a man with

an upturned collar and a turned-down hat pressed Mrs. Hayes' hand in the line of visitors, and blessed her for her interest in the temperance cause. Not until she had made some gracious reply did she recognize the gleeful face of one of her own prankish boys. At another time one of the boys on returning home, said to her: "Mother, just unpack my satchel." As she opened it, out jumped two bantam chickens protesting loudly against such sudden confinement, while mother and son laughed loud and heartily over the joke. While her husband was with his brigade in winter-quarters during the Civil War, Mrs. Hayes and her two sons spent two winters in the West Virginia camp. An old soldier, a member of the brigade, thus described the family life of the Hayeses in camp: "I can see Mrs. Hayes now. Her hair smooth, her face like a madonna's, and two or three little boys clinging about her waist or hugging her skirts as she walked among the soldiers to ask about our rations or our quarters. We named our camp after her and there was not a man in all those thousands but would have died for Lucy Webb-Hayes." Such a motherhood is a mightier defense of the home than a cordon of soldiery armed to the teeth.

A third weapon—the ballot—has been put into the hands of motherhood in some of the states; by-and-bye this weapon will be put into her hands in every state of the Union. It is a new weapon

and an efficient one. It is a weapon that motherhood has needed lo these many years to defend the home from manifold enemies. By means of this convenient weapon militant motherhood is given a better opportunity in her fight against the foes of family. Whether or not a woman believes in the academic question of woman suffrage, to ignore this mighty weapon is a tragedy.

Illuminating, indeed, are these words of Jack London in his memoirs of an alcoholic entitled "John Barleycorn." "The women are the true conservators of the race. The men are the wastrels, the adventure-lovers, and gamblers; and in the end it is by their women that they are saved. About man's first experiment in chemistry was the making of alcohol, and down all generations to this day man has continued to manufacture and drink it. And there has never been a day when the women have not resented a man's use of alcohol, though they have never had the power to give weight to their resentment. The moment women get the vote in any community, the first thing they proceed to do, or try to do, is to close the saloons. In a thousand generations to come men, of themselves, will not close the saloons. As well expect the morphine victims to legislate the sale of morphine out of existence. The women know. They have paid an incalculable price of sweat and tears for man's use of alcohol. Ever jealous for the race, they will legislate for the

babes of boys yet to be born; and for the girls, too, for they must be the mothers, wives, and sisters of these boys."

It is with the ballot that motherhood may strike the deadliest blow at the beasts of intemperance and the foul birds of impurity.

The daring deed of Rizpah melted the heart of David, and he did for that militant mother of the long ago the little that was in his power to do. He gave the bodies of her sons decent burial, and so Rizpah's vigil was not in vain. She attained all that she fought for: she successfully kept from her beloved dead the birds and beasts that sought to prey upon them.

Rizpah's sons, alas, could not know of their mother's heroic devotion and she, in turn, could receive from them no expression of gratitude for her tireless vigil. But it is otherwise with the living sons and daughters of our modern militant mothers. There is yet time and place and opportunity for grateful expressions of mother's sacrifice and her unwearied ministry in behalf of her children. And what more beautiful service can sons and daughters render than considerate affection and undying gratitude for mother love?

A few years ago there died, after a brave fight for life, a noble and useful man. He was Governor of Minnesota at the time of his death, and prominently mentioned as a candidate for presi-

dent of a great political party. His life career is an inspiration to every boy in the land. His home was one of poverty and his mother took in washing to support the family. When John Johnson reached the age of thirteen he said to his mother: "Mother, you shan't do any more washings for a living. Not another tub, not another day's work of this kind. I will make our living now." And that thirteen-year-old boy from that hour supported his mother and took a heavy burden from off her drooping shoulders. Of such substance are real statesmen made. And it was largely because the citizenship of Minnesota knew the kind of a boy John Johnson had been that they elected him, a Democrat, governor in a state that was overwhelmingly Republican.

The unpayable debt of militant motherhood ought to be recognized by sons and daughters now. Mother love in its very unselfishness is often accepted as a matter of course until too late to speak the words that only mother could fully understand and appreciate. Amidst such reflections on mother love there arises before me the scene of a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The season of the year was Christmas and the day was that of Christmas Eve. The place was the interior of a plain little home and the occasion was the last simple service of the church for a mother who, dying, left nine children, seven very small. Think of such a service as this at Christ-

mastide when childhood's splendid fancies run riot! Never did death seem so tragic as to those of us gathered there that grey December day. The Scripture reading, the prayer, and hymns were alike difficult, almost impossible, so violent was the wailing of the motherless nine. The brief service over, there came the heart-breaking moments of leave-taking. Unable to endure the pitiful sight I turned my face toward the wall only to discover hanging directly in front of me, in modest frame, this sentiment in verse:

"Mother works for you,
Looks after you,
Loves you, forgives you
Anything you may do.

"Understands you;
And then the only thing
Bad she ever does to you
Is to die
And leave you."

Oh, Rizpah, of the Mother Heart, militant mother of the long ago, may your heroic vigil in defense of your slain inspire the militant motherhood of today to defend their living progeny from the subtle foes that threaten every home.

Oh, sons and daughters, sublimely sacrificed for, bravely defended, speak, I pray you, the gratitude of your hearts to mother now; break the box of fragrant ointment as Mary did for Jesus ere He went to His death on Calvary.

GOD OF OUR MOTHERS, WE PRAISE THEE FOR THOSE WHO MOTHERED US WHEN MOST WE NEEDED THAT HOLIEST OF MINISTRIES. WE SHALL NEVER CEASE PRAISING THEE FOR THOSE UNSELFISH SOULS WHO TAUGHT US PATIENCE, FIDELITY, AND TRUST AND THEREBY MADE US KNOW WHAT THINE OWN LOVE IS LIKE. HELP THOU US TO BE LIKE THOSE GREAT HEARTS, WHO, HAVING FINISHED THEIR EARTHLY CAREERS, STILL LIVE IN HALLOWED MEMORIES.

XI

THE BESETTING SIN

"O lead me, Lord, that I may lead
The wandering and the wavering feet,
O feed me, Lord, that I may feed
The hungering ones with manna sweet.

"O strengthen me, that while I stand,
Firm on the Rock and strong in thee,
I may stretch out a loving hand
The wrestlers with the troubled sea."

FRANCIS RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

XI

THE BESETTING SIN

"The sin which doth so easily beset us."—*Hebrews* 12:1.

THIS text is a clause from a sentence which begins with the word, therefore, and the word, therefore, always refers the reader back to something that has gone before. The word, therefore, like its twin brother, wherefore, is a connecting link between an argument and a conclusion. It will be observed by students of the Holy Scriptures that many chapters of the New Testament begin with either the words wherefore, or therefore. Indeed, of the thirteen chapters of the epistle to the Hebrews, four chapters open with one or the other. These "wherefores" and "therefores" are illustrative of a fact that every reader of the Bible, and particularly the New Testament, ought to bear in mind, that the chapter divisions of the Bible books often break abruptly into a train of thought and that in order to understand the teaching of the Scriptures the only satisfactory way is to read the preceding chapter, and frequently the one that follows. Or, better yet, read the Bible book by book if you would master its contents.

The first and second verses of the twelfth chap-

ter of Hebrews conclude impressively the lofty eloquence of the eleventh chapter, and the eleventh chapter might properly be entitled the "Heroes of the Faith." The long line of martyrs and witnesses is there—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David—they are all there. And the unnamed great are there "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions," and they are all commended for their fidelity. Having called the roll of the faithful, the writer conceives of them as a vast cloud of witnesses assembled as spectators at one of the old athletic contests, looking on as each generation of their successors run the Christian race. The figure is striking and most interesting, and the verses are climacteric. "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This is, indeed, a profound passage of Scripture, and a most fitting conclusion to the eloquent verses that precede it. But attention is not invited to this passage as a whole, but to a

single clause of this great sentence—"The sin which doth so easily beset us." All of my life I have heard of besetting sins, and while I do not remember hearing a sermon from this text, this is undoubtedly the origin of the phrase.

Examine these words carefully, "The sin which doth so easily beset us." In the margin of the Revised Version two other possible renderings of the Greek are given and one of them is especially interesting. It is: "The sin which doth closely cling to us." The Modern Speech New Testament rendering of this clause is "The sin which doth so cleverly entangle us." These renderings are as flashlights upon the teaching of this text, they carry with them the colour and spirit of the old-time athletic contests. A runner is about to run a race, he girds up his loins—that is: tucks the loose ends of his outer flowing robe under his girdle, and with nothing to impede the movements of his limbs he is off like a flash. Imagine this scene, and then examine these words: "The sin which doth so easily beset us," that is, any sin that hinders, embarrasses, and defeats.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." The writer may have in mind sin in general, not any specific sin at all. Sin in the abstract, for instance that power of evil of which we are conscious sometimes as surrounding us, pressing in, and moving against us. There are experiences not uncommon when evil seems to envelop us like an

awful black, damp, threatening peril and destruction. I have been indoors during a heavy storm when the wind blew a gale and I observed the power of the wind as it pressed its force against the side of the house like some terrible monster threatening at any moment to topple the house over and overwhelm me with destruction. There are times when sin in the abstract seems so to threaten our characters. It may be that this is the idea that the writer has in mind, sin in the large, pressing in, besetting us on all sides and threatening to overwhelm us.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." On the other hand the writer may have in mind a specific sin and if so, most likely the sin of unbelief. He has called the roll of the faithful, he has shown how by faith and through faith the great characters of Israel served God and man. And over against this accomplishment of faith he warns against the most subtle and destructive sin of unbelief. It paralyzes, it destroys. Let a man once lose faith in another man and his service for that man is at an end. Lose faith in God and a godly life is impossible. Faith is so fundamental, love and hope are fruitless possessions without faith. And the writer here may have in mind this dreadful sin of unbelief. No man can run the Christian race so handicapped, so harassed. As the loose hanging garment might trip the runner and put him out of the running, so this

subtle sin of unbelief threatens, yea more, insures defeat.

But whether the writer of these words has in mind sin in general, or a specific sin, it is true in either case that there are temptations to which we are exposed, certain tendencies and weaknesses that justify the phrase "besetting sins."

For example: there are the sins to which we are exposed by temperament or disposition. Unquestionably, we inherit tendencies toward certain habits. There is a vast deal in heredity, though not everything. Study the history of certain families through several generations and peculiar traits or dispositions may be traced like the waters of the Missouri river as they mingle with the Mississippi. It may be a quick, violent temper, a grasping and covetous disposition, a weakness for alcoholic drinks, a disposition to falsify, to play fast and loose with truth, or a jealous and envious disposition. On the one hand these. On the other, generosity, hospitality, a kindly and lovable disposition, a large and forgiving spirit, a reputation for honesty and sobriety and truthfulness. Hence the maxim: "It runs in the family." Every neighbourhood, in its comment either of approval or disapproval, illustrates this truth that there are traits and dispositions for good or evil handed down from one generation to another. Bearing this in mind, we see that it is so much easier for some people to do right than for others.

One man, for example, deserves no credit for not being a drunkard, there is no temptation in strong drink for him. Another man fights the very demon of strong drink daily, only God knows the rigour of his battles. It is easy for one man to be honest, he has back of him five generations of honest ancestors, it would actually be hard for him to do a dishonest thing. But here is another man who is the product of generations of kinspeople who were dishonest, and the temptation that this man must battle with continually is that of turning aside from the path of integrity. We are all more or less exposed to sins of this kind; the stream of tendency pours steadily upon us, these hereditary influences compass us upon all sides. These besetting sins are not figments of the mind, they are very real, they seem sometimes almost to have personality; if we are to conquer them we must be prepared to do them battle royal.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." There are also those sins to which we are exposed by our occupation or profession. There are subtle temptations that confront us which grow out of our vocations. The doctor, the lawyer, the minister, the railroader, the politician, the salesman, the editor, the tailor—every business and profession offer particular and peculiar temptations. There are subtle temptations to which the public speaker is subjected. A man who does much public speaking, and especially if he does it

well, is always on the brink of peril. The temptation to exaggerate is ever present. Diamonds are as large as hazel nuts, mountains as high as the Himalayas, automobiles travel seventy miles an hour,—these and kindred superlatives are ever on the tip of the tongue. If he does not watch himself under the spell of a great audience the orator will find himself toying with the truth and speaking not at all as the facts warrant. The fatal gift of fluency has been the tragic undoing of many gifted public speakers. The besetting sins of our vocations must be taken into account, they are not imaginary, they are only too true. They must be met and overcome.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." Then, there are the sins, also, that beset us at various ages. The sins that attract us in youth, the sins that beset us in the early twenties, the sins that middle age is exposed to, and the sins that beset even the aged. Every period of life has its special perils. If the temptation of youth is to have its fling, so are there subtle temptations that come in middle life for strange and tragic departures from paths of rectitude. Some one has coined the phrase: "The atheism of middle age," and thereby has warned us of that perilous period between the dash and optimism of youth and the quietude and poise of old age.

"The sin which doth so easily beset us." Many are the sins to which we are exposed through

some peculiar weakness of character either from any of the reasons stated above, or quite apart from them. Even the strongest character has somewhere a weak point. Men who could not be tempted by money may be tempted by position and fame. Men that you could not buy with gold may be strangely won by praise. Every man has his "blind side." There are a hundred avenues that lead to the citadel of the human will and ninety-nine of them may be closed and still the tempter find entrance by way of the one hundredth left unguarded. It is related in the Old Testament the manner in which King Ahab met his death. He went out to battle clad in his armour and a certain man of the enemy drew his bow at a venture, that is—without taking aim at any one in particular,—and his arrow smote the king of Israel between the joints of the armour. Ahab died at evening of that same day from the effects of the wound. We do well to examine the joints of our armour; there may be a place through which an arrow of the evil one may make its death-dealing way.

What shall we do with the sins which so easily beset us? What shall be our attitude toward them? How shall we be able to overcome them?

Let us recognize our besetting sins. Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control, "these three alone," says Tennyson, "lead life to sovereign power." "Know thyself," is the wise advice of a great man of another day. While it is wrong to

brood upon one's sins, it is not only right but necessary to know one's weakness. It is better to study one's self and find out one's own shortcomings than to be busy searching out the shortcomings of others and holding them up as targets for censure. Recognize your besetting sins, know your own weakness, realize your most vulnerable point and shield it, guard it, protect it, always.

Let us try to correct our besetting sins, and not be too sensitive about it. It is related that old Dr. Samuel Johnson went to a minister with this request: "Will you tell me what are the defects of my life so I may mend them and have forgiveness for them?" And when the minister replied: "Well, I think you are rather hasty in your temper, very dogmatic," Dr. Johnson exclaimed angrily: "What? You are a fool! If there is one thing I am free from it is a dogmatic hasty temper; get out of my sight, sir."

If we are to conquer our besetting sins we shall have to be humble and be willing to learn. And the author of this Epistle has shown us the great way to overcome the sin that doth so easily beset us, the wise counsel is in the very sentence from which this text is taken: "Looking unto Jesus," is the advice he gives us. God be praised for a perfect example: "One who hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." If there are besetting sins let us thank the good Father that there is also a Besetting God. Says the Psalm-

ist: "Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thy hand upon me." If sin be around us and about us, thank God we are likewise beset behind and before and all about us by love of One "who knoweth our frame."

"My soul, be on thy guard;
Ten thousand foes arise;
The hosts of sin are pressing hard
To draw thee from the skies.

"O watch, and fight, and pray;
The battle ne'er give o'er;
Renew it boldly every day,
And help divine implore."

ADORABLE FATHER, WE BLESS THEE FOR HIM WHO IS ABLE TO LIFT US FROM OUT OF OURSELVES AND TO ESTABLISH US IN THE WAY OF HOLINESS FOREVER. STRENGTHEN US TO KEEP OUR EYES STEADFASTLY ON THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH WHO HATH BEEN IN ALL POINTS TEMPTED LIKE AS WE ARE YET WITHOUT SIN.

XII

CHRIST THE CREED

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
Boundless love in Thee I find:
Raise the fallen, cheer the faint,
Heal the sick, and lead the blind.
Just and holy is Thy name,
Prince of Peace and righteousness—
Most unworthy, Lord, I am;
Thou art full of love and grace."

CHARLES WESLEY.

XII

CHRIST THE CREED

"She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world."—*John* 11:27.

WHAT a pity that there should have arisen any controversy over Martha and Mary, any setting of one over against the other, resulting on the one hand in undeserved depreciation of Martha, and on the other in fulsome praise of Mary. Both were useful women, both were good, both were needed. They represent two types of mind, two temperaments, two attitudes toward life. Mary was the pensive, the poetic, the devout; Martha the active, the alert, the ministering. In the Scriptures from which this text is taken the marked difference between the sisters is seen. When it was learned at Bethany that Jesus was coming Martha went to meet Him, but Mary still sat in the house. And this difference is precisely what might have been expected—it is the difference between Elijah and Elisha, between Peter and John, between Luther and Melanchthon. Leaving aside the temperamental unlikeness of the sisters, let us follow Martha as she goes to meet her Lord. When she

comes in speaking distance of Him she says: "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. And even now I know that whatsoever thou shalt ask of God, God will give thee. Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again." Martha replies: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Then Jesus spoke those large and comforting words that have been as a pillow of softest down for earth's weary and grief-stricken millions:—"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Martha answered: "Yea, Lord: I have believed that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, even he that cometh into the world."

These words of Martha invite our attention—this noble confession of her faith in Christ. In passing it may profit to observe that this confession of Martha's is identical in substance with Simon Peter's in Cæsarea Philippi when Jesus asked him the question: "Who say ye that I am?" Stripped of all verbiage and human accretions, this is the Divine creed of Christendom. This creed of Martha's is just "Jesus Christ" and that is everything.

This creed is simple. Is a simpler creed than this conceivable? It is within the range of the humblest mind, even the mind of a little child can grasp this creed; the most stupid savage in the

heart of darkest Africa or the South Sea Islands can catch its gimmerings. The creed is concrete, revealing God in the terms of flesh and blood. Travelling through the mountains of the south a man passed a little cabin on the hillside in front of which there sat on the doorstep a very old black woman. "Living all alone, Auntie?" was his kindly query. "No, suh, jest me and Jesus," she answered. In her own way the devout old woman expressed the conviction of Charles Wesley in his memorable hymn: "Thou, O Christ, art all I want."

Minds that are slow to see God in star or rose or on old ocean or hear Him in oratorio, perceive Him in Jesus Christ as He moves through Galilee, Judea, and Perea, living in unbroken fellowship with God and in tenderest ministry to the lowliest of men. The simplicity of this creed is altogether beautiful, it is a person—not a doctrine; a life—not a dogma; not a crumpled and buried religious enthusiast, but the risen, triumphant, regnant Christ.

This creed is profound. It is deep; no one has ever fathomed fully its depths. It is high; no one has ever ascended its heaven-kissing heights. It is all-encompassing; no mind ever circled it. The greatest intellects have bowed in reverence before this creed. "Our divinest symbol," Carlyle calls it. "The realized ideal of humanity," affirms Herder. "The highest object we can possibly

imagine in respect to religion, the Being without whose presence in the mind perfect piety is impossible," confesses Strauss. "The divine man, the saint, the type and model of all men," attests Goethe. "The most beautiful incarnation of God —God in man," cries Renan. Comes also Browning:

> "I say the acknowledgment of God in Christ,
> Accepted by the reason, solves for thee
> All questions in the earth and out of it."

Galileo, Kepler, Bacon, Newton, and a great company of other cathedral-minded men have set the name of Jesus Christ above every name. The world has had nearly two thousand years to learn of Him and the world has learned much, and yet there are profundities in Jesus' teaching and character not yet explored by the most massive minds.

This creed is comprehensive. It is both inclusive and conclusive. It is possible to have profundity without comprehensiveness. In Jesus Christ are both. To believe on Him, to seek His mind, is to enter new paths to power with God and man. There is such tremendous sweep to His teachings, such wide range and rich versatility in His mind. In Him are the finest and highest of ethical standards as, for example, the surpassingly wonderful Sermon on the Mount. In Him are the choicest principles of conduct applying to every human and Divine relationship. There is

not a side, an aspect, a phase, nor an experience of human life that is not included in this Christ the Creed! God, man, sin, justice, grace, mercy, brotherhood—they are all comprehended in Him.

This creed is practical. It is workable. With great heights of idealism on the one hand it is linked to the lowliest walks of ministry on the other. It appeals not merely to the intellect but also to the love faculty in humanity—the affections. Men who know nothing of the metaphysical aspects of Christ's divinity and care less, see in Him the beneficent example of gentle and ministering life. John Stuart Mill, observing the practical nature of Christ's teaching, said: "There is no better rule than so to live that Christ would approve your life." This creed cannot be honestly accepted without the fruitage of a life overflowing with love for God and man. This creed centres in Him whose earthly ministry was summed up in the eloquent sentence: "He went about doing good."

This simple, profound, comprehensive, and practical creed needs no revision. Human doctrines about Christ need to be revised; in truth, they must undergo revision. Our opinions change, our views grow, we learn truth from various angles, but Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and forever. Even so, this is a growing creed; the centuries are still in full chase after the Christ and He is still far ahead. We cannot revise Him.

there is no need that we should; but there is every need that He revise us. We need to bring ourselves to this creed and be measured by Him instead of attempting to measure Him by ourselves. What an all-sufficient creed is this Christ of God, living—not dead, whom Martha confessed long years ago!

Acceptance of this creed combines loyalty with the widest liberty. If there be loyalty to the Lordship of Jesus then there may be the widest liberty in methods and opinions. It must be apparent that there can be no unity of opinion on various phases of Scriptural subjects interesting, though not vital, such as the nature of the resurrection, the state of the dead, the manner and time of our Lord's second advent. But if there be loyalty to Christ as Lord and Leader of our lives, liberty of opinion may be held in broadest charity. Has not the time fully come when churches should exemplify the wisdom of requiring only belief in this creed without attempting to define the nature of Christ either as to His humanity or His divinity? Such definitions at their best are speculative. Neither the terms "Unitarian" or "Trinitarian" occur in the Scriptures, they are products of theology, they are confusing and devisive. On the one hand, schools of theology have grouped parties about "Jesus" and ignored or belittle His Lordship. On the other hand, parties have grouped their followers about "Christ" and

quite disregarded Jesus and His humanity. What a tremendous gain it would be for the unity of the church if only belief in Jesus Christ were required, without attempting to go into interpretations of His person, insisting only on allegiance to Him as the all-sufficient Mediator between God and man and the full and soul-satisfying answer to Philip's pathetic plaint: "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us."

Christendom has suffered "more than tongue can tell" because of human creeds which, while made in unquestionable sincerity, have been the fertile cause of division among Christ's followers. That was a wise word spoken by Thomas Campbell, a great Apostle of Christian unity, who, more than a hundred years ago, thus averred: "If a creed contains more than is in the Bible it contains too much; if it contains less than is in the Bible it contains too little; if it contains precisely what is in the Bible it is unnecessary." It is occasion for gratitude that human creeds and confessions of faith bulk little today as compared with half a century ago; let us hope that they will bulk less and less as the years come and go, while Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient creed of Christendom, will emerge more and more from out the historic confessions like some mighty mountain peak.

I have recently read the spiritual biography of Benjamin Fay Mills and found it of entrancing

interest. Dr. Mills had a most extraordinary career. From 1886 to 1897 he was one of America's most eminent and successful evangelists. Then his theology became greatly liberalized and he turned to other "flower fields of the soul" for spiritual nourishment. He took up theosophy and became a lecturer for that cult. For some years he occupied the pulpit of an ultra-liberal church on the Pacific Coast. For fifteen years he devoted himself to study, meditation, and prayer, that he might discover an "essential, simple, practical, and universal rule of life which if obeyed would solve all of man's individual and social problems." And, now recently, B. Fay Mills has come back to the ministry from which he withdrew. The account of his struggles for peace of soul is a most revealing document. Noteworthy, indeed, is his confession that this simple creed of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, alone satisfied his soul's deepest longings. Pathos and beauty commingle as this seeker after God bares his very soul in contrite confession. "I have had a creed," writes Dr. Mills, "and it is this: I believe the best I can think, being fully persuaded that if what now I think be not the truth it is because the Truth transcends my present power of thought. I still hold this creed, but in my own ignorance and limitations I have felt the need of a Spiritual Master, and for myself and the world I have felt the need of a Divine Saviour, a need that if it

is met at all is met once for all in Christ. Jesus Christ to me is uniquely divine, and while I would joyfully acknowledge the 'True Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world,' and that 'God may be seen God, in the star and the stone and the soul and the flesh and the clod,' I have come to believe that in all the cases, even to the greatest of Christless seers, it may truly be said that 'the Light shineth in the darkness and the darkness apprehendeth it not.' I think I have needed my experience to prove the incompleteness of the best man has known apart from Christ and sufficiency of Christ; to enable me to speak as a Greek to Greeks, a Jew to Jews, an agnostic to agnostics, a pantheist to pantheists. I cannot say I have acted contrary to the light I have had, but I regret any obstacles I may have placed in the way of any soul or in the path of the progress of the church, and I ask all to whose attention these words may come to pray that the Master's words may be fulfilled in me,—'Every branch in me that beareth fruit, He purgeth it that it may bring more fruit.'"

Thus B. Fay Mills turns again to Christ the Creed, bringing with him "the fruits and flowers" of painstaking study and long reflection, laying them every one on the altar of his Lord. There is something tender and beautiful in the experience of this distinguished minister and there is this much more—a suggestion of the rich fruit-

age that will result when seekers after God the world over come bringing their all to the Christ.

"Our little systems have their day;
They have their day and cease to be:
They are but broken lights of thee,
And thou, O Lord, art more than they."

O CHRIST, THOU CREED OF MARTHA, OF PETER, OF PAUL, OF JOHN THE BELOVED, WE REST OUR WEARY SOULS IN THEE. THOU AND THOU ALONE HAST THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE. FORGIVE OUR CONTROVERSIES OVER WORDS AND NAMES AND AS THOU AND THE FATHER ART ONE SO MAY WE ALL FIND GLORIOUS ONENESS IN THEE.

XIII

THE KEEPING OF THE FAITH

"O brother-man! the Master seeks
Today for men;
Cause not the Lord, by thy delay,
To call again.
Gigantic ills oppress the land—
There's want and woe on every hand;
For God and right take valiant stand—
Be faithful then!

"O brother-man! now is the time
In which to live;
The Future is no mighty god
With power to give.
Do what thou hast to do today!
From present needs turn not away!
Let sloth nor ease cause no delay—
Live! brother, live!"

S. S. SHEPHERD.

XIII

THE KEEPING OF THE FAITH

"I have kept the faith."—*II Timothy* 4:7.

OF all the places in Rome about which Christian history was made, none is so impressive as the old Mamertine prison. In all probability that ancient bastile contains the identical dungeon in which Paul was confined and where he wrote the second epistle to Timothy. You go down a flight of stairs of steep descent and find at the bottom a dimly lighted cell. The sides are of rough and jagged stone and the floor is of smooth slabs. The place is damp and a musty odour taints the atmosphere. Nearby the yellow Tiber flows. Here were confined some famous politicians and soldiers, and the story of their lives is dark with tragedy. The chief interest which this cell has for us is that it was probably the prison of Paul. Here he may have lived for several months. Here, perhaps, Luke visited and remained to comfort him. Here Demas was his companion until he forsook the Apostle and left him to meet his fate at the hands of pagan Rome. Here lived Paul while without, the Romans consorted and conspired, or "drove in furious guise along the Appian Way."

Without was the Circus Maximus, filled daily with pleasure lovers for whom the gladiators fought while the multitude applauded wildly. The devil, in the form of Nero, was on the throne, and in a little while he was to let loose the fires of hell upon the company of defenseless Christians. And from this cell, in all likelihood, went forth the last letter that Paul ever wrote.

"I have kept the faith." What is meant by the word faith here? What is it that Paul had kept to the very end? What does the Apostle mean? It is comparatively easy to show what he did not mean. For one thing, the word faith here surely does not mean a set of doctrines, a formal theology, or a credal pronouncement. Paul might have held a mental assent to a dozen doctrines of Christianity and not lost as much as a night's sleep, much less a drop of blood in behalf of the Christian religion. Speaking in general terms, the word faith may here be rendered life. "I have lived the life." When Paul was converted to Christianity he became a new creature and to the end that new creation was continuous. Daily he was made over. Daily he died to the old life and rose again to the new. To the end of his days he was a growing Christian with an experience of soul expansion and enlargening vision.

Or, again, the word faith here may refer to the vow or pledge Paul made on that Damascus way when he saw the Risen Christ. That vision

transformed Paul's life, or rather it was the beginning of the transformation. Standing before King Herod Aprippa, Paul referred to this Divine event and exclaimed: "Wherefore, O king, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly Vision." Here he writes: "I have kept the vow, I have lived the life." It is as if Damon were dying, and, looking in the face of his beloved Pythias, said: "I have kept the vow." It is as if Jonathan were on his deathbed, and clasping the hand of David exclaims: "My brother, I have kept the vow." It is as when Nathan Hale was led out to die, and, turning his strong young patriot's face to the company of British soldiers, said: "My only regret is that I have but one life to give for my country. I have kept the faith."

So much then for what it was Paul kept—not a set of doctrines, but a life—not a formal theology, but the passion of a spirit—not a solemn ceremony, but a covenant made with none other than the Christ, Himself,—"I have kept the faith." And how, pray? By what means—after what fashion—did he keep the vow and live the life and make room for the Spirit? I fancy a great many of us are more interested in the faith keeping us than we are in keeping the faith. This may be due to wrong conceptions of Christianity, or to indifference, or to both. How strange it is that we reason differently when we come to things spiritual than we do in any other realm of

thought! No student thinks that mere matriculation in a college will provide his education. Only a dunderhead would so believe. No man when he opens a store or shop or bank believes for a minute that the mere opening of store or shop or bank is sufficient. He knows it is not sufficient. His personality must be invested. There are customers to please; goods to be bought and sold; the business has to be carefully started and persistently followed up.

A man's business, if it be successful, is not an incident in his life, but in a sense life itself. A man buys a farm. Behold the virgin fields tantalizing in their fallowness! Sun, rain, and soil will, when combined with intelligent sowing, weeding, plowing, harvesting, and crop rotation, produce certain results, but not without man's labour. Working together God and the farmer will obtain a rich fruitage from garden, orchard, and field.

It is not different when we come to religion. God and man must still work together. To the Philippians Paul wrote: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure." Paul kept the faith by giving himself in magnificent ministry to mankind. There is no other way to keep the faith. A man cannot enclose his faith in a Sunday suit, or fence it with the Christian ordinances, nor build battle-

ments of Biblical texts about it and then say: "I have it here!" Lo, when he examines himself, to his astonishment, he cannot find what he thought he had.

Jesus' parable of the pounds illustrates the folly and futility of such an endeavour. A certain nobleman about to go to a far country called his servants and entrusted each with a pound (about seventeen dollars) and said: "Trade ye herewith until I return." Make an investment—go to work. In the course of time the nobleman returned, the servants were summoned to give an account. One had earned with his pound ten pounds. He was warmly commended. Another had with his pound earned five pounds. He, also, was commended, though not so cordially. A third servant unrolled his pound from a napkin where he had preserved it and apologetically explained that he was afraid of losing what he had been given, therefore he had kept it for his master intact. And the nobleman was angered and took away this pound and gave it to the man who already had ten.

At first blush this seems unjust—on second thought it appears exactly just. Men always lose what they seek selfishly to keep. Sometimes this may not seem to be true; yet when the final balances are made it has to be true. The pitiful weakness of the church is that so many nominal members do that very thing. They seek to keep

the faith in that way and they lose the faith by that very process. A man can keep the faith only by going on. He compromises the faith by standing still. He betrays the faith when he goes back. Paul kept the faith by losing his life and so became "heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

The keepers of the faith are the world's saviours. Humanity has ever been helped to march Godward by men who have thus kept the faith; men who have cherished ideals high and noble and have cherished them to the very end. Of the many great sentences Paul wrote none is more eloquent than this one from his second epistle to the Corinthian Christians: "I am willing to spend and be spent for your souls." That was the manner in which he kept the faith; and every soul, whether in the limelight of publicity or in the obscurity of homely toil, has kept the faith by living the life and embodying the principle of fidelity to ideals hard to achieve and harder still to preserve. Many a young woman of that great company who toil for wages has kept the faith with virtue by renunciation and ministry of self to worthy goals. Many a man sorely tempted to be dishonest has kept the faith by living his life on the high level of his ideals despite manifold hindrances. You can hinder and harass such characters, but you cannot overcome them; you can beat them down but you cannot blot them out.

In the wee small hours of a night session of a national political convention a great leader, after two nights without sleep—and suffering with a heavy cold, went on the platform to address the thousands. So far as human eyes could see, he was defeated as a moulder of his party's thought. He was far in advance of his party and the people generally. They had not caught up with him. He was and is a prophet. And that man spoke to those delegates assembled these pulsating words: "You may dispute whether I have fought a good fight, you may dispute whether I have finished my course, but you cannot deny that I have kept the faith." Nor could they. Strong men wept when he said that,—the words rang with the high note of sincerity.

But this Tentmaker of Tarsus could affirm it *all* without disputation: "I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith, I have finished the course." And every word of this was grandly true. What I am anxious to have you believe is this: a man may fail in his methods, he may bring defeat upon himself and his followers in the advocacy of certain principles or policies, but if his life rings true to lofty ideals he has kept the faith and you cannot gainsay him.

"They who have strewn the violets reap the corn,
And having reaped and garnered, bring the plough,
And draw new furrows 'neath the healthy morn,
And plant the great Hereafter in the Now."

I remember meeting, some years ago, "Golden Rule" Samuel M. Jones, the famous three-term mayor of Toledo, Ohio, the man without a party whose only rule was "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them," and whose practice of this rule was literal and love-wrought. I recall how that big freckled hand looked as I clasped it; I delighted in the twinkle of his blue eyes; I felt the power of the man's simple life, his rugged personality, and all because he was keeping the faith as he saw it so magnificently. A little while after that, "Golden Rule" Samuel M. Jones died. There is no monument to him in Toledo so far as I know, but if you speak his name in praise there, you will bind the common people to you by bands as strong as steel. They believed in him because he believed in them and trusted him to the fullest.

I read recently in the Christmas number of a well-known magazine, a story entitled: "The Girl Who Walked Without Fear." That story moved me as only a few stories have. I tried to read that story out loud to others and a sorry success I made. I had to stop, I had to take out my handkerchief, I lost my place—I could not go on. I am not sure of myself now to tell that story in detail, but this is the substance of it: a lovely little Chinese girl, a Christian, brought up in the home of missionaries, came to America with her benefactors. This little girl, just bud-

ding into winsome maidenhood, believed that everybody—think of it—*everybody* in America was a Christian and therefore could be trusted implicitly. Like a good angel from a better land than ours that demure little maid walked through New York's streets on Christmas Eve unafraid, thinking no evil, believing all pure in heart, at peace with God and man. And as she went she imparted, and all unconsciously, her spirit of faith to a poor, shivering tramp contemplating suicide in the icy water; to a crafty, cynical, meagre-lived newsboy; to two mothers, one poor and worn and the other rich and lonely; to two shopgirls in a department store, one of whom was motherless and sorely tempted, and both imperilled; imparted such faith, such hope, that the tramp took courage, the newsboy went to church, the mothers found peace, the shopgirls saw a great light, and all came under the spell of Christmas Eve and by faith they, like their benefactor, beheld Bethlehem—the birthplace of our Lord, and felt the unseen presence of the Saviour round and about them.

Are we keeping the faith or are we trying to make ourselves believe the faith can keep us quite apart from what we do, or think, or how we love? Do we believe in saying prayers, or do we believe in prayer? God is good, God is love, God is wise; but goodness and love and wisdom cannot get to us if we close the doors of our lives against them, and if we invite them in and close

the door upon them they shrivel and die for want of food and exercise.

"A creed is a rod,
And a crown is of night;
But this thing is of God—
To be man with thy might;
To grow straight in the strength
Of thy spirit,
And live out thy life as the light."

GREAT TEACHER, INSPIRE US TO MASTER THE HARD LESSON OF LOYALTY. STEADY OUR WAVERING PURPOSES. STRENGTH OUR FLABBY WILLS. KEEP BACK THY SERVANTS ALSO FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS, LET THEM NOT HAVE DOMINION OVER US, THAT WE MAY BE WORTHY TO WALK IN WHITE WITH ALL THOSE WHO HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

XIV

CHRIST AND THE CROWDS

"One stone the more swings to her place
In that dread temple of Thy worth;
It is enough that through Thy grace,
I saw nought common on Thy earth."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

XIV

CHRIST AND THE CROWDS

"But because of the multitude I said it."—*John* 11:42.

WHAT Italian skies and sunsets are to the artistic minded, so to the seekers after God is this eleventh chapter of John. It would be well if all Christians read this precious Scripture at least once a week. There are three things that contribute to the value of this chapter.

In the first place: the narrative is as a flash-light upon the most intimate friendship of Jesus' life, revealing both the tenderness and the strength of such a blessed bond. Public characters may have numerous acquaintances, but not very many close friends. The fact that so many have a claim on them is one reason why few have special claim. Besides, one's friends can never be as numerous as one's acquaintances. Jesus was at home in Bethany. There he could relax and enjoy to the fullest, love and hospitality. Some day, perhaps, an artist will paint as his masterpiece the Bethany home with Jesus as guest, Mary sitting contentedly at His feet, Lazarus reclining nearby, and Martha busily plying her household cares.

In the second place: this chapter most tenderly reveals Jesus' sympathy with sorrow and suffering.

Here is that shortest verse in all the Bible—"Jesus wept." And the Greek word translated wept here means not the loud outcry but quiet, suppressed weeping, quivering lip, and tear-moist cheeks. The scene was full of pathos, the wail of the mourners, the grief of the sisters, the heart-break of it all moved Jesus strongly and He wept:

"Jesus wept! those tears are over,
But His heart is still the same;
Kinsman, Friend and Elder Brother,
Is His everlasting name.
Lord, when I am called to die,
Let me think of Bethany."

In the third place: this eleventh chapter of John reveals Jesus' unbroken consciousness of God. You and I have a consciousness of God but it is fragmentary, broken, and incomplete. We are wonderfully conscious of God at times, then again we grope in utter darkness. How different it was with Jesus! To the mourners there at Bethany it seemed that death was greater than God. To Jesus, God was greater than death and it was impossible for Him to think of death as extinction or separation from God. Thus it was He was able to say out of His knowledge of God these words so vibrant with hope: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die."

There are still other values to this great chapter,

but I omit reference to them now in order to consider a sentence that fell from Jesus' lips at Lazarus' graveside. Before He called upon Lazarus to come forth He prayed audibly. He lifted up His eyes and said: "Father, I thank Thee that thou heardest me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me."

"Because of the multitude." For a large part of Jesus' public career the populace thronged about Him wherever He went. The Gospel of Mark, for instance, has been aptly called "The Gospel of the Multitude." To read this book, the briefest and boldest of the four in picturesque figure, is to look out over vast crowds of men and women and to hear the tramp, tramp, of thousands of feet and the confused murmur of myriad voices. In the four Gospels the word multitude occurs one hundred and eighty-eight times. A great crowd affects people differently—some are wearied and harassed by the sight of a multitude—some amused and entertained—some moved by the sight to expressions of contempt—others view a crowd with cold, commercial eyes—while still others find something mesmeric in a multitude and are quite carried off their feet both literally and figuratively.

How did the multitude affect Jesus? For one thing, Jesus had compassion on the multitude and that word compassion is a great and good word.

It means sympathy or pity or sorrow for. Jesus looked upon the multitude with compassion and two reasons are recorded why He so looked upon the throngs that followed Him. In Matthew 9:36 it is written that "When he saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." The figure is eloquent. A flock of sheep in Palestine without a shepherd is a pathetic sight, for a shepherdless flock there means, sooner or later, a calamity. The Eastern shepherd lives with his sheep—"he goeth before them and they follow him; for they know his voice." Hence, to Jesus the multitudes were as wandering, shepherdless sheep without protection, distressed and in imminent peril. Jesus knew what was in man, He saw as no other the possibilities in men for both good and evil, and His great shepherd heart went out in deep solicitude for the masses. And thus feeling for them and with them Jesus was moved to say "The harvest is indeed plenteous but the labourers are few. Pray ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest that he send forth labourers into his harvest."

In Matthew 15:32 it is again recorded that Jesus had compassion on the multitude and this time because they were hungry and he feared if they were sent away without food they would faint by the way. The disciples, however, thought best to send the crowd away unfed because seven loaves

and a few small fishes were all that could be found and to supply so many with so little seemed to them an utter impossibility. But Jesus commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground and He took the seven loaves and the fishes and having thanked God for them, He gave to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the multitude. "And they all ate, and were filled: and they took up that which remained over of the broken pieces, seven baskets full."

You will observe that Jesus' compassion for the multitude found expression in ministering to them. In the first instance He advised that His disciples pray that labourers be sent forth into the field of humanity, and straightway He sent the Twelve out with authority to cast out demons, and "to heal all manners of disease and all manner of sickness." In the second, He supplied the hungry horde with abundance of wholesome food. Dr. J. H. Jowett finely says: "From this Scripture, Matthew 15:32, I learn three things; first: I learn what my Saviour thought about a crowd; secondly, I learn what my Saviour felt about a crowd; and because I learned these two things I learn how the disciples of Jesus have to think and feel about a crowd."

"Because of the multitude." Followers of Jesus Christ, who have caught His vision and are filled with His spirit, will not be content merely to sympathize with the masses but will set about to

help them in their losing battles against poverty, vice, and ignorance. Numerous churches that wear Christ's name do not have compassion for the multitude, they scarcely know that the multitude exists, they only know their own little circle and that none too well. Thousands of professed followers of Christ are as indifferent to the needs of the masses as the company who crucified Christ were to His suffering when "sitting down they watched him there." Jesus' programme for the multitude is most inspiring. Jesus taught the multitude, healed the multitude, fed the multitude. For the four-fold record of this ministry of the Master to the masses read Matthew 14: 13-23, Mark 6: 30-46; Luke 9: 10-17, and John 6: 1-15.

And now in Bethany by the grave of Lazarus Jesus renders another service to the multitude. He prays aloud, attributing all the power and glory to God for the great event which was to take place. Moreover, He offered that prayer audibly that the multitude standing around might know and recognize whence came His power and authority. This simple and reverent act of Jesus at Lazarus' graveside was characteristic of His entire life. He claimed nothing for Himself apart from the Father; He said: "The Father is greater than I." It was not necessary for Him to pray publicly at Lazarus' grave, He did it for the sake of the surrounding multitude.

There is, in this simple act of Jesus, a philosophy

which is found in all social expressions of religion; the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper are as much for the sake of others as for the individual who receives and enjoys them. The very idea of the church—"the called together"—is a standing witness to the social nature of the Gospel. Secret discipleship makes no converts. Better half a dozen Barnabases than a score of Josephs of Arimathea. Jesus wished the multitude to recognize God as the source of every blessing, and hence He prayed audibly in their presence, giving all the glory and honour to God. What rich fruitage would result if we were as anxious to give God the glory for our achievements as we are to obtain the credit for ourselves. It is a subtle temptation to believe and want others to believe that our intellects, genius, industry, and business acumen, have won for us the prizes of life. We do well to remember that pregnant clause in the first sentence of Holy Writ: "In the beginning God," and so accord Him the glory and honour.

"Back of the loaf is the snowy flour,
And back of the flour is the mill;
And back of the mill is the wheat and the shower,
And the sun and the Father's will."

Some years ago, in a southern city an extraordinary amusing incident is said to have happened at a college commencement. The valedictory address was delivered by a young man who pos-

sessed a large bump of originality, or arrogance, or both. In his speech he said that it was the custom for the valedictorian to say a lot of gushing words complimentary to the faculty, but that he saw no need of doing so, that he was rather glad to get away from his teachers and likely they were glad to see him go. He saw no reasons for thanking them at all since they were paid for doing what they did. If he had not applied himself their instructions would have been in vain. Hence, if anybody should be praised and complimented it ought to be the graduates, not the faculty. As I recall the story, this valedictorian closed his truly remarkable speech by modestly thanking himself for his diploma, and thanking the Lord that he was about to say Good-bye to the college forever.

This incident is comical, even ludicrous. We wonder how the faculty received that speech, if the audience applauded, if any flowers were given the speaker. But it is also very crude, discourteous to the core, and at its best a statement of only a half truth. Who of us can truthfully say that he is self-made? After we have done our best could we have done it if others had not also made their contribution? Deep in debt we are to somebody, be it wife or husband, parent or child, friend or neighbour,—above all to God.

What of the multitudes today? What of their plight, perils, and woes? What of our attitude

toward the masses? Whether or not we have a message for the multitude, the multitude has a message and a voice for us, a message of opportunity, a voice of invitation. If any one who knows the grim facts of the life of the masses today can look upon the vast crowd "hearing oftentimes the still, sad music of humanity" without a clutch at his heart and a lump in the throat, he is not of the mind of Jesus.

Because of the multitudes General William Booth dedicated his life to the city's poor and outcast and from his labours came the Salvation Army. When the General was in America he told how it all came about: "I hungered for hell," he said, "I pushed into the midst of it—the West side of London. For days I stood in the seething streets drinking it in and loving it all. Yes, I loved the souls that made up the muddy streams. I went home one night to my wife and babies and said to her: 'Darling, I have given myself and I have given you and our children to the service of these souls.'"

Vachel Lindsay in his "General Booth Enters Into Heaven," with fine poetic fervour, portrays the blind commander marching into the City that "lieth foursquare" at the head of a great multitude redeemed from vice and woe:

"Booth led boldly with his big bass drum—
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)
The saint smiled gravely and they said: 'He's come.'
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

Walking lepers followed, rank on rank,
Lurching bravoes from the ditches dank,
Drabs from the alleyways and drug fiends pale—
Minds still passion-ridden, soul-powers frail:—
Vermin-eaten saints with mouldy breath,
Unwashed legions with the ways of Death—
(Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?)

"Every slum had sent its half-a-score
The round world over. (Booth had groaned for more.)
Every banner that the wide world flies
Bloomed with glory and transcendent dyes.

. . . . . .

Jesus came from out the court-house door,
Stretched his hands above the passing poor,
Booth saw not, but led his queer ones there
Round and round the mighty court-house square.
Yet in an instant all that blear review
Marched on spotless, clad in raiment new.
The lame were straightened, withered limbs uncurled,
And blind eyes opened on a new, sweet world."

In our city recently there occurred the annual field day for the children of the public schools, and a right gala day it was. In company with five thousand fellow citizens I beheld that spectacle and was deeply moved by what I saw. The children were dressed in white, the girls jauntily beribboned for the most part, and all carried flags. There were drills and marches and countermarches, there was band music, and there were songs sung by those clear, young voices. It was a beautiful scene. The gay crowds in the grandstand, brilliant in multi-coloured dresses, the waving of red, white, and blue streamers and pennants,

the laughter, the applause, the glory, the poetry of it all, made it impressive beyond description. But best of all was the singing of the state song by that chorus of a thousand school children:

"Not without thy wondrous story,
Illinois, Illinois,
Could be writ the nation's glory,
Illinois, Illinois.
On the record of the years
Abraham Lincoln's name appears,
Grant and Logan, and our tears,
Illinois, Illinois."

And what of that multitude—our children and our neighbour's children—what of that gay and happy throng? What shall come out of that multitude in the days that are yet to be? Will it be virtue or vice, peace or war, God or Mammon, what shall the harvest be?

We cannot say precisely, but this we know: if we shall do for this multitude in our midst what Christ did for those who thronged Him, if we shall feel for them and with them, if we shall teach them and be willing to learn from them, heal them and feed them, it may be that some day the meaning of a certain great passage of the Revelation of John will flash out upon us: "After these things I saw, and behold a great multitude, which no man could number, out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, arrayed

in white robes, and palms in their hands; and they cry with a great voice, saying, Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb."

O CHRIST OF THE CROWDS, THOU FRIEND OF SINNERS WHOM THE COMMON PEOPLE HEARD GLADLY, THOU SHAMEST OUR INDIFFERENCE TO THE FATE OF THE MASSES. MAY WE FOLLOW THEE FROM THE CHURCHLY EDIFICE AND FROM OUR COMFORTABLE HOMES INTO THE STREETS AND ALLEYS OF THE GREAT CITIES AND MINGLE FREELY WITH THE MULTITUDE TO WOO AND WIN THEM FOR THEE.

XV

GOOD-BYE TO GLORY

"The tumult and the shouting dies,—
The Captains and the Kings depart,—
Still stands thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart;
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget,—lest we forget."

RUDYARD KIPLING.

XV

GOOD-BYE TO GLORY

"And she named the child Ichabod, saying, The glory is departed from Israel."—*I Samuel* 4:21.

IT was a tragic day for the Hebrew nation. The battle had gone sore against the Israelites, and the Philistines were in possession of the ark of God. Eli, the aged prophet and judge, sat beside the gate of Shiloh anxiously awaiting a messenger from the battle field. And soon one came bearing the dreadful news that the army of Israel was defeated, that Eli's two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were dead, and that the ark of God was taken by the enemy. The tidings were so terrible that the old man fell from his seat, breaking his neck, thus adding another tragedy to the sorrows of that day. Nor was that all. Eli's daughter'in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was so prostrated by the death of her husband and the capture of the ark of God that she gave birth prematurely to a son whom she named, with dying breath, Ichabod, saying, "The glory is departed from Israel, because the ark of God was taken and because of her father-in-law and her husband."

This is the Old Testament story that has made

the name Ichabod synonymous with defeat, with loss of prestige and honour. Ichabod—Good-bye to glory, what a melancholy epitaph and how fittingly though pathetically it has been written over nations, institutions, and individuals!

The visitor to the Old World is seldom permitted to forget that he is in the midst of monuments and memorials reflecting a glory that is past and gone. Ichabod is written over many a stately ruin and broken column. Nowhere does one feel this so profoundly as among the relics of ancient Rome once called "The Mistress of the World," and "The Eternal City." Standing ankle deep in the dust of history, one looks upon the tomb of genius and mighty minds, inspects statue and tablet, views long stretches of scenery famous only because once the theatre of some historic event or home of a famous character. Gibbon consumes many thousand pages to trace the story of the Roman Empire's fall, but there is a huge canvas in the gallery at Versailles that tells it truthfully in a single picture. It is entitled: "The Last Days of Rome," and portrays a banquet scene of revelry and debauchery. Roman senators and chieftains, instead of being busy with the affairs of the state, are holding half nude women in their arms, while others are drinking deeply from jewelled cups. Still others are beastly drunken, some of them lying stretched out upon the floor or under the banquet table. It is a picture of moral depravity

such as one cannot soon forget. It is ever so! When a nation loses the sense of sin it begins to decay at the very heart. Jeremiah, in chapter eight, the twelfth verse, charges the cause of Israel's downfall to sodden immorality. "Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? Nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush." When Israel forgot how to blush her national doom was sealed.

A nation may lose her glory, however, without a departure into the grosser sins and vices. Commercialism, for instance, may so enter into the very heart of a people's life that lust for gain corrodes the nobler and finer ideals. A close observer has remarked that the attitude of America toward the present European War is palpably coloured by the commercial spirit. Said he: "There is a very great danger that when the history of this world conflict be written that America's part will be that of a supposedly neutral onlooker shrewdly speculating the while how many millions of dollars may accrue to the United States because of Europe's misfortune." This criticism is strongly phrased and is, perhaps, not exactly just, but there is enough truth in it to give a sober pause to every citizen of the United States who holds dear to his heart the traditions that glorify our country's history as a whole.

The true grandeur and glory of a nation has often been dimmed and alas, blotted out by mili-

tary ideals. Our own country faces a grave issue in the policy of "preparedness," advocated by many of our political leaders. Quite apart from any partisan or political phase of the issue, the average citizen is sorely perplexed by the gravity of the preparedness doctrine. If once our nation adopts the militarist policy no one knows where it will end, but judging by the history of nations that have adopted it the fruits of such a policy is war—not peace. It has been our glory in the past that our dependence was not in forts, in battleships, or in soldiery, but in spirit of democracy, justice, and liberty. The ideals of our fathers in this high regard may "go a-glimmering" before the new policy of a great army and a mighty navy for American defense.

"For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard—
All valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding, calls not Thee to guard;
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy mercy on Thy people, Lord!"

The hope of a people lies largely in the crystallization of sentiment against public and private sin, against corporate delinquencies. Agitators and reformers, even of the most radical type, are necessary. They are the John the Baptists, the Voices in the Wilderness, calling on the people to repent. Without such voices we should soon be undone and Ichabod written largely over every

institution. Splendid, indeed, are the words of Wendell Phillips, spoken in behalf of the reformer and agitator: "If the Alps, piled in cold and silence, be the emblem of despotism, we joyfully take the restless ocean for ours, only pure because never still."

Glory has departed, too, from many a church once useful, once the centre of peace and power. Churches exist as a means to an end and whenever they become self-centered Ichabod is written over their thresholds. A church is a body of Believers in Christ banded together for growth in Christlikeness, for the carrying of the Gospel to all nations, and for the conservation of human life from birth to everlastingness. Every church is a missionary organization, is such by its charter in Christ. Whenever it becomes exclusive, caters to any particular class, coddles grown-up folks, neglects its children, dwindles into sort of a social club, or becomes institutionalized, it loses place and power. There comes to my mind a great city church upon which Ichabod is written in letters so large that every passerby may read. Fifty years ago this church was in the height of its glory. Splendid audiences filled its immense auditorium. There were constant conversions. That church ministered to the poor and needy, and flourished the while like a green bay tree. By-and-bye, the membership shifted, many going out to the suburbs and back on the hills. In the course

of a few years that church became what is known as a downtown problem. The prosperous members left the immediate vicinity, and apartment and boarding houses crowded closer and closer. Instead of trying to serve the new constituency by providing for the young men and women who filled the nearby boarding houses, and caring for the swarms of little children that played on the nearby streets, that church went on in the same old way, catering to the membership that lived out on the hills, and boasting of what it used to do in the good old days. That church today presents a tragic picture of departed glory. It stands like a spectre and a ghost of its great past, a monument of failure and disgrace.

Ichabod—Good-bye to Glory—has been written pathetically over unnumbered homes once rainbowed by the glory of deep religious life. Homes where God was honoured, where the Scriptures were loved and read, are in many instances the homes today of a generation candidly indifferent to the claims of the church and the life of the Spirit. Like nations, families rise and fall. The expression: "Degenerate sons of illustrious sires," is alas, both eloquent and melancholy. It is quite generally believed today that the home and family life is disintegrating. Statistics available are far from heartening. Divorces are on the increase and marriages are on the decrease. The Chicago Vice Commission, after an exhausting

survey of the causes of the disintegration of family life, gives as the first contributing cause the lack of religious instruction in the home. In tens of thousands of homes where the parents are nominal Christians there is no recognition of God, not even grace at the table. Parental discipline has declined, parental respect is lacking on the part of multitudes of growing boys and girls. The glory of the family life where affection rules has in numerous cases disappeared. With many families home is simply a place to eat and sleep. The members of the family circle go elsewhere for amusement, elsewhere for social life, nowhere for spiritual food, and the glory of the sweet intimacies has departed from such unfortunate homes.

The glory of the spiritual life has departed from many who still hold to the forms and externals of Christianity. There are nominal Christian homes today where the mere announcement that a son or daughter had decided for the ministry or the missionary career would involve the household in a paroxysm of grief and bitter disappointment. Fifty years ago the same announcement in a Christian home would have been the occasion of tears of joy and of thanksgiving to God for the unspeakable blessing.

That Ichabod is frequently written on the individual character is a melancholy fact. That men and women say "Good-bye to Glory," that they turn away and aside from the glory of high

ideals and simple faith and give themselves over to the world, the flesh, and the devil, is alas, only too true. Mr. Ingersoll, in his oration at his brother's grave, said that "A wreck at last must mark the end of each and all," and that "Every life, no matter if its every hour is rich in love and every moment jewelled with a joy, will at its close become a tragedy as sad and deep and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death." This is superb rhetoric but it is fallacious reasoning. There are far worse tragedies than death. The loss of a good name is worse. The wreck of character is infinitely sadder.

Never shall I forget a poor, beaten, and battered hulk of humanity whose acquaintance I made early in my ministry with a city church. He limped into the building during a Sunday morning service, as curious, as comical, and as pathetic a figure as I ever saw. He followed the sermon with avid interest and entered into the singing of the more familiar hymns with apparent relish. He waited to see me after the service and informed me that he was an old sailor, a sinner of deepest dye, an inmate of the county Infirmary. He had a peg leg and walked with a crutch; his right arm was maimed and hung stiff at his side; he was blind in one eye and a long scar disfigured the right side of his face. The lobe of one ear was punctured and his nose was misshapen and looked as though it had been broken. He laid a tremulous

hand on my shoulder and looked me straight in the eyes as he inquired: "Do you think the Lord would receive me, poor, broken, and sinful as I am?" "If you come to Him penitent and believing, most assuredly He will receive you," I answered. "Then I am coming forward next Sunday morning," he replied, and pressing my hand he hobbled away, as tragic a wreck of humanity as ever I laid eyes upon.

He came forward the next Sunday morning and in the presence of a congregation made up of men and women all bearing the marks of clean thinking and decent living, he witnessed the "good confession." One afternoon of that same week he was baptized and it took four of our strong men to assist with his immersion, so helpless and crippled was he. After his baptism he sat with me in the Sunday Schoolroom, his bruised and battered face aglow with such a light as never was on sea or land. He told me the tale of his life —how I wish I had taken notes then and there of his life among all sorts and conditions of men the world around. If Jack London or Morgan Robertson had heard that story either could have woven from the bare outline of the old man's tale a story of the sea, thrilling with adventurous episode. The old man (he was seventy-four) had been a sailor for the most of his life; a sailor of misfortune, one would say. He had actually been a pirate and the hole in the lobe of his ear was

the work of a bullet fired by a sailor on a vessel which he and his fellow-pirates were plundering. He had been in numerous hand-to-hand fights and the scar on his face had been made by a cutlass. He had been wicked and wild all the days of his life, and now he was homeless, penniless, and all but invalid. "And to think," he said, "that God will take an old battered hulk like me and fill my flabby sails with the wind of His holy spirit. O, if I had but given myself to Him when I had health and vigour. I have nothing to offer Him now but this poor old wreck of myself." And the old man sobbed like a little child.

Every Sunday morning for full six weeks he worshipped with us, entering into the service with deepest joy and a wholeheartedness that was good to see. Then came a Sunday morning when I missed him and on calling at the Infirmary I found him in the hospital a very sick old man. He was overjoyed to see me. I read to him the fourteenth chapter of John and other comforting Scriptures and we had prayer together. I left him full of hope and the marred face aglow with a peace that was not of this earth. Busy with many pastoral duties, I fogot the old man for a week or ten days, and on recalling him I hurried at once to the Infirmary hospital. He was not in the ward. I made inquiries. Alas, he had died a week before and since no one had seen fit to call his pastor, or perhaps no one knew of the old man's church

connection, they buried him in potter's field without a single song of Zion, a word of Scripture, or prayer of faith.

Poor old battered hulk! I see him sometimes in my day dreams, hobbling out of the past, a great gaunt figure, terribly maimed, fearfully broken; and I seem to hear his deep voice wail out the words of mingled regret and marvel: "O, if I had but given myself to the Lord when I was young and vigorous instead of now when I am old, helpless, and poor. And yet, how wonderful the mercy of God to receive an old battered hulk like me and fill my flabby sails with the strong wind of His holy spirit."

Glory has departed from lives in which the grosser sins find no hospitable welcome. Glory has gone from men and women whose lives are correct in observance of form and customs, and of whom perhaps not the slightest infraction of a conventional moral standard might be charged. These are the men and women who have become worldly in their outlook, who are indifferent to things spiritual, who have no prayer life, and to whom the higher things of the soul are as so many "old wives' tales." They have said "Good-bye to Glory," unconsciously, perhaps, but nevertheless glory has departed from them, leaving their lives barren and bleak.

If glory is to abide with state, home, church, and individual, our work will have to centre about

the child. The early chapters of I Samuel, from which this text is taken, will show that Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, were tragic failures, due to some neglect on Eli's part; while on the other hand, the overtowering character of that same period, the prophet Samuel, was so nurtured and trained by his devout mother and by the influences of religion that he grew up into a manhood that was invulnerable to all the attacks of evil. "The child comes into the world," as Wordsworth says, "trailing clouds of glory." It becomes our bounden duty and our great privilege to give our best to preserve that glory in all its pristine splendour. Just here has been our great weakness—we have not dealt honestly with the child in our midst. We shall have to come back to the child, we shall have to put the child in the midst if glory abide. "We need not predict the future. We can determine it if we educate the whole of every child for the whole of life."

FATHER IN HEAVEN, WE HAVE CONFUSED GLORY WITH DIZZY HEIGHTS OF PLACE AND POWER, WITH WEALTH AND LUXURY. OUR EYES HAVE BEEN DAZZLED BY THE FLEETING AND THE TEMPORAL. BUT WHEREAS ONCE WE WERE BLIND, NOW WE SEE. IN THE LIGHT OF JESUS' TEACHING WE BEHOLD THE GLORY OF THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT AND THE PURE OF HEART—THE GLORY THAT FADETH NEVER.

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